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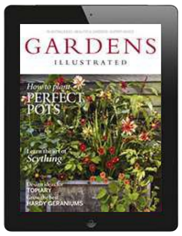
editor's letter

There's a long-standing debate about whether or not gardens and gardening can be considered as art forms. I strongly believe that they can, so a few years ago, at the opening of the gardens at Durslade Farm, the Somerset gallery of contemporary art dealers Hauser & Wirth, it was heartening to see an entire gallery space devoted to Piet Oudolf's planting designs. The colourful, highly detailed, hand-drawn plans are remarkable in their own right and it was significant that garden design was so unequivocally recognised as a work of art. Arguably the most famous garden designer in the world, Piet has worked on some impressive projects, notably the High Line in New York, and we are delighted to feature his Oudolf Field at Hauser & Wirth Somerset on page 30. We also visit the garden at Federal Twist in New Jersey created by US blogger James Golden. James – who references Piet as an influence – says the main purpose of his garden is 'aesthetic, ornamental, even emotional'. Along with an increasing appreciation of how beautiful nature-inspired plantings can be and, in particular, meadows, I keep meeting gardeners who have taken up using scythes, so we asked champion mower Simon Damant to give us some advice on best practice. We also meet oak-swill basket maker Owen Jones, who uses thin strips of coppiced oak to weave strong, practical and wonderfully sculptural forms. Beautiful and useful; it is what we love best at *Gardens Illustrated*. I hope you enjoy the issue.

Juliet



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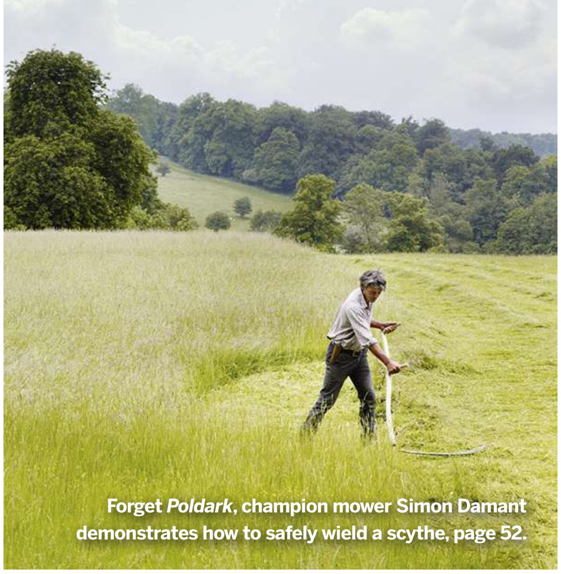
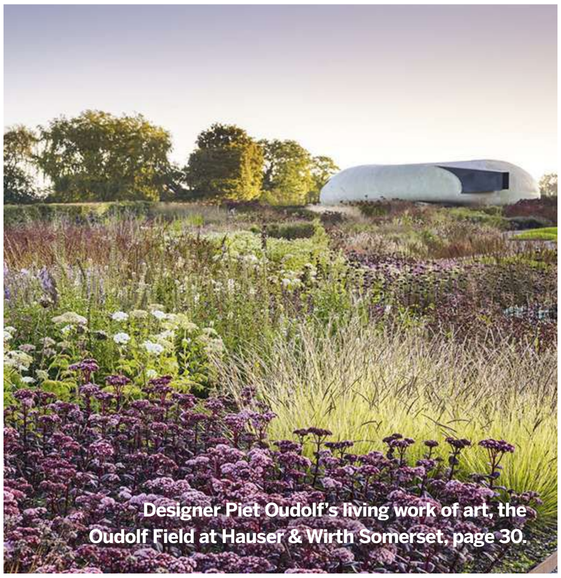


Forget *Poldark*, champion mower Simon Damant demonstrates how to safely wield a scythe, page 52.



Designer Piet Oudolf's living work of art, the Oudolf Field at Hauser & Wirth Somerset, page 30.

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

FERGUS GARRETT
Plantsman and head gardener at Great Dixter in East Sussex.

CAROL KLEIN
Plantswoman and presenter of BBC *Gardeners' World*.

DANIEL J HINKLEY
American plantsman, planthunter, horticultural writer and lecturer.

ALYS FOWLER
Kew-trained gardener, author and television presenter.

DAN PEARSON
Garden designer, plantsman and columnist.

ANDREW MONTGOMERY, JASON INGRAM

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Photograph by **Andrew Montgomery**

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JASON INGRAM, ANDREW MONTGOMERY

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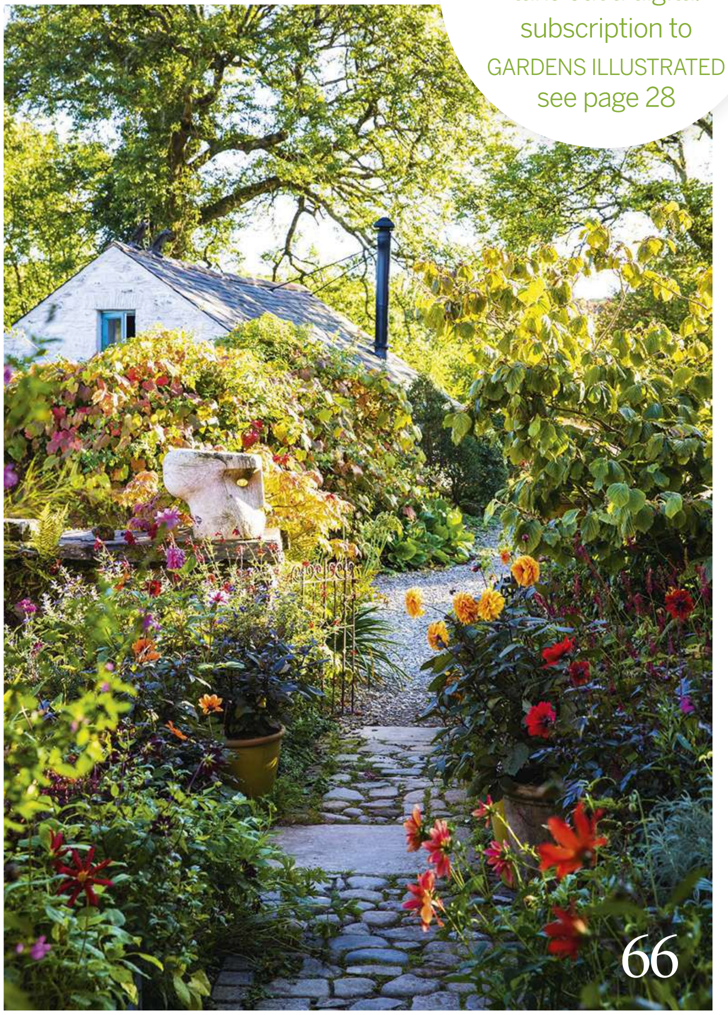

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contributors

JAMES DOBSON

CLAIRE MASSET

Like the garden historian Twigs Way, whom she profiles for us on page 64, writer and editor Claire has a passion for women gardeners throughout history. Her new book, *Secret Gardens* (published by Pavilion Books in March 2017) explores some of the National Trust's hidden gems.

"Twigs is the most affable and inspiring of garden historians. An hour spent with her will have you reaching out for her latest book."

FIONA McLEOD

UK-based Fiona loves the challenge of photographing gardens; having to work so quickly and efficiently to capture the fleeting light. She's also in awe of the skilful work of the garden owners she meets, including Sean Swallow whose garden is featured on page 46.

"I loved photographing Sean's garden. It is a beautiful and serene space, with unexpected angles and magical vistas."

ANDREW MONTGOMERY

NATASHA GOODFELLOW

Natasha is a writer and editor who is fascinated by everything to do with gardens and rural crafts. On page 74 you can read about her visit to the Cumbrian workshop of Owen Jones who uses traditional methods to make his oak swill baskets.

"I've never met anyone as utterly in tune with his work as Owen. I left feeling he had found the true secret of happiness."

DIANNA JAZWINSKI

Dianna is a photographer specialising in gardens, plants and florals. She particularly loves to visit nurseries for the opportunities to explore the myriad colours and shapes of a particular plant group. You can see the images of geraniums she shot for us on page 56.

"Geraniums are so amazingly diverse and it is endlessly fascinating to observe their individual details close up."

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USA/CANADA *Gardens Illustrated*, PO BOX 37495, Boone, IA 50037-0495 USA.

ADVERTISING ENQUIRIES

☎ +44 (0)117 314 8817 | heather.golden@immediate.co.uk

EDITORIAL ENQUIRIES

☎ +44 (0)117 314 7440 | gardens@gardensillustrated.com

✉ *Gardens Illustrated*, Immediate Media Company Bristol Limited, 2nd Floor, Tower House, Fairfax Street, Bristol BS1 3BN.

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MAGAZINE CONTACTS

EDITORIAL	
Editor	Juliet Roberts
Contributing editors	Alys Fowler, Fergus Garrett, Daniel J Hinkley, Carol Klein and Dan Pearson
Art director	David Grenham
Deputy editor	Sorrel Everton
Deputy art editor	Niki Goss
Production editor	Juliet Giles
Designer	Liam McAuley
Editorial assistant	Alys Hurn
Botanical adviser	Dr James Compton
Thanks this issue	Chris Jones, Rosanna Morris and Jenny Price
ADVERTISING	
Advertising manager	Heather Golden **0117 314 8817** heather.golden@immediate.co.uk
Senior brand sales executive	Katie Gibbons **0117 933 8072** katie.gibbons@immediate.co.uk
Brand sales executive	Olivia Charlesworth **0117 314 8361** olivia.charlesworth@immediate.co.uk
Classified sales executive	Max Spalton **0117 300 8530** max.spalton@immediate.co.uk
USA advertising representative	Kate Buckley buckley@buckleypell.com
Advertising designer	Matt Gynn
INSERTS	
Laurence Robertson	+353 (0)876 902208
CIRCULATION, MARKETING, PRESS & PR	
Newstrade manager	Rob Brock
Subscriptions director	Jacky Perales-Morris
Direct marketing manager	Aimee Rhymer
Press officer	Dom Lobley dominic.lobley@immediate.co.uk
MANAGEMENT	
Chairman	Stephen Alexander
Chief executive officer	Tom Bureau
Managing director, Bristol	Andy Marshall
Publisher	Marie Davies
Publishing assistant	Rosa Sherwood
SYNDICATION AND LICENSING	
Director of licensing and syndication	Tim Hudson
PRODUCTION	
Production director	Sarah Powell
Production co-ordinator	Emily Mounter

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Dig in

What's happening, where to go, what's in flower and what to buy this month

NEWS COMPILED BY **ALYS HURN**

JAMES BYRNE

RESEARCH

Building on the buzz

To help beekeepers learn more about why honeybee numbers are in such dangerous decline, cereal bar maker Eat Natural has teamed up with the British Beekeepers Association (BBKA) to supply hives that can track bee health and behaviour using remote technology. You too can get involved through the company's Pollenation initiative – either by giving a home to one of the hives or simply planting some seeds. Eat Natural is also launching a limited-edition Honey Bar, sales from which will help fund the BBKA's Build the Buzz campaign. **eatnatural.co.uk**

eden project

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RHS SHOW

DIVINE DAHLIAS

If you're mad about dahlias, head over to this month's RHS Wisley Flower Show (6-11 September) where the National Dahlia Society is hosting its annual extravaganza from 7 September. The event promises to be a visual feast, with more than 100 exhibitors competing for the top prizes. This year, Wisley welcomes a record number of award-winning nurseries and trade stands to the show, offering visitors plenty of plants and gardening wares to peruse throughout the day. **rhs.org.uk**

READER OFFER

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Get your wildflower meadow off to a stylish start with a selection of heritage seeds from Thomas Etty. There are more than 100 different wildflower seeds suitable for autumn sowing to choose from, including heartsease (below), and *Gardens Illustrated* readers can order a collection of three seeds – wild poppy, columbine and foxglove – for the special price of £8 (including p&p). To order call 01460 298249 or email sales@thomasetty.co.uk

EXHIBITION

Big blue

Earlier this year plant hunter Julia Corden and her team spent two weeks trekking to the remote region of Eastern Bhutan in search of the blue poppy. Her photographs of the journey, which highlight the plants, people and stunning landscape of the remote Mountains of Bhutan, are displayed in a new exhibition *In Search of the Blue Poppy: Bhutan* at the Explorer's Garden in Perthshire, home to the National Collection of *Meconopsis*. Until 1 November, **explorersgarden.com**

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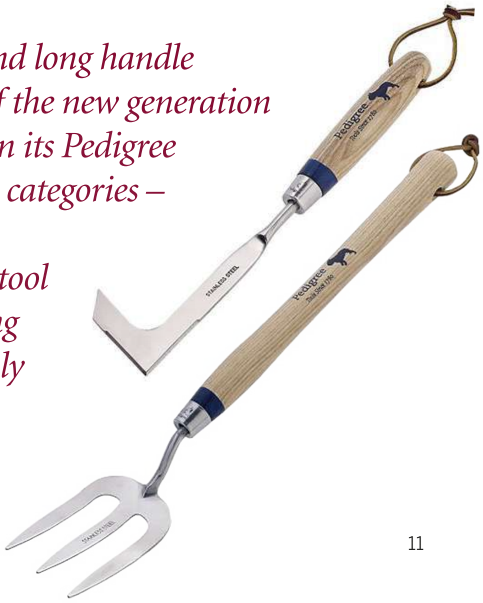

RHS WISLEY FLOWER SHOW/LUKE McGREGOR; BLUE POPPY/JULIA CORDEN

Orleans Reinette
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Newton Wonder
Bess Pool
Rosemary Russet
ington/Dumellors Seedling
Laxton's Superb
D'Arcy Apice
Monarch
Barnack Orange
Knobby Russet
Broad-Eyed Pippin
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Lord Derby

ONLINE DATABASE

An apple a day…

Did you know, you could eat a different kind of English apple every day for more than six years without eating the same one twice? The People's Trust for Endangered Species (PTES) is launching a new online database to make it easier for the public to discover and buy traditional heritage fruit trees. Funded by the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, the database is the first of its kind to list every known UK-grown cultivar of orchard fruit, from apples and pears to medlars and mulberries. By helping cider makers, orchard owners and gardeners to find nurseries and grow their own fruit trees, PTES hopes to conserve and restore traditional orchards across the country, safeguarding habitats and cultivars for future generations. **ptes.org**

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Diary

Ceramic jars by Kate Malone.

- **Kate Malone: Inspired by Waddesdon**

Ceramic artist Kate Malone is exhibiting new work, inspired by the gardens, collections and archives at Waddesdon Manor. Until 23 October, 11am-5pm. Waddesdon Manor, Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire HP18 0JH. Tel 01296 653203, waddesdon.org.uk

- **Cabbage Palms and Cruise Ships**

Discover the story behind the subtropical Abbey Gardens on the Isles of Scilly – described as the hot house at Kew with the lid off – in a lecture by historic planting advisor Karen Bridgeman. 8 September, 11am–2.30pm. £15. Painshill, Portsmouth Road, Cobham, Surrey KT11 IJE. Tel 01932 868113, painshill.co.uk

- ***Dare to be Wild***

The film retelling the story of Mary Reynolds, the Irish garden designer who won a gold medal at the 2012 RHS Chelsea Flower Show, hits cinema screens nationwide on 23 September.

- **Masterclass with Neil Lucas**

Find out everything you need to know about ornamental grasses, from design to maintenance, with grass expert Neil Lucas. 15 September, 2pm-4.30pm. £35. Knoll Gardens, Stapehill Road, Hampreston, Wimborne BH21 7ND. Tel 01202 873931, knollgardens.co.uk

- **Autumn Flower Workshop**

Learn how to make use of colour-rich autumn plants in a flower arranging workshop. Refreshments included. 20 September, 11am-3pm. £55. West Green House, Thackham's Lane, Hartley Wintney, Hampshire RG27 8JB. Tel 01252 844611, westgreenhouse.co.uk

- **Festival of Flowers**

See how award-winning florists transform the rooms at Leeds Castle into works of art, and take part in floral themed events. 24-28 September, 10am-4.30pm. £24.50. Leeds Castle, Maidstone, Kent ME17 1PL. Tel 01622 765400, leeds-castle.com

- **Malvern Autumn Show**

Visit the annual show that celebrates the autumn harvest, including the UK's National Giant Vegetable Championship. 24-25 September, 9am-6pm. £16 in advance. Three Counties Showground, Malvern, Worcestershire WR13 6NW. Tel 01684 230128, malvernautumn.co.uk

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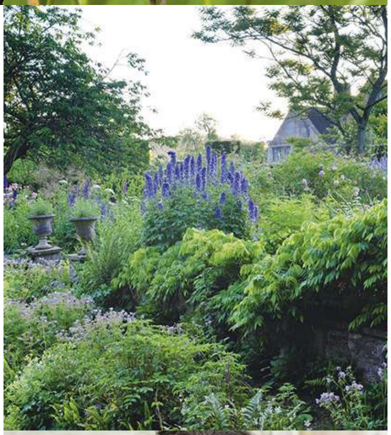

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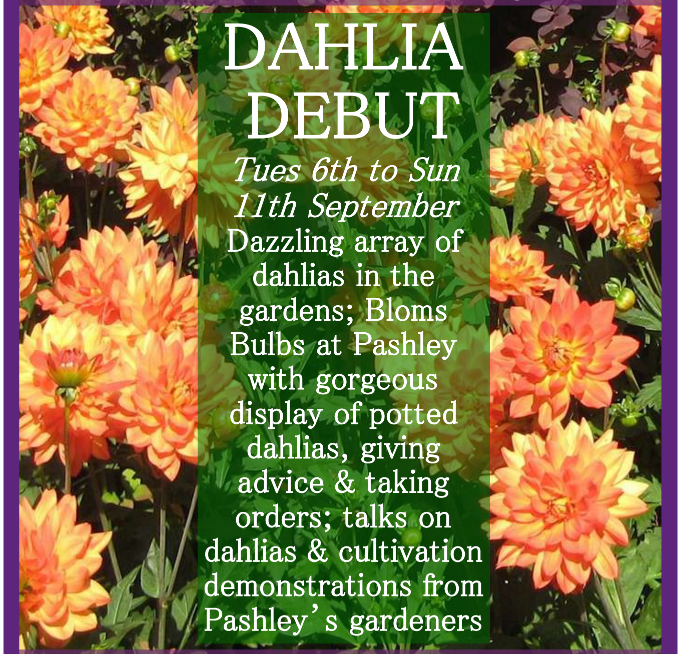

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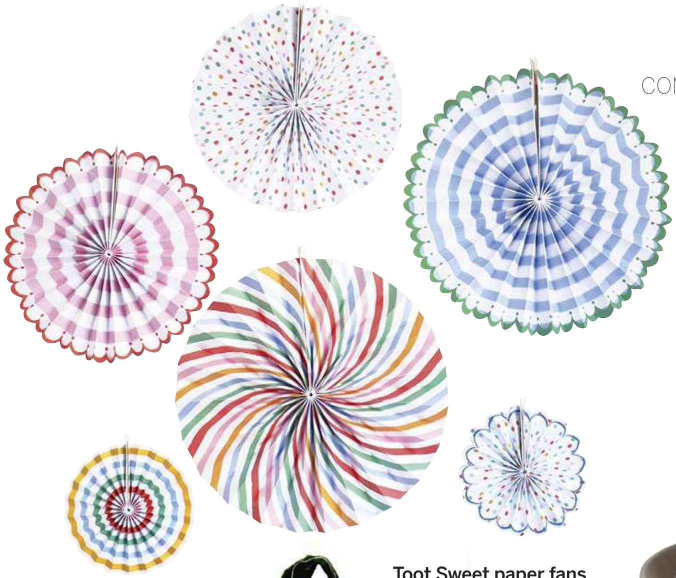

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Tucana Sickle, £68, 0845 330 3148, implementations.co.uk

Replacement Rubber Rings, £1 for set of 10, 0800 096 0938, manufactum.co.uk

Copper jam pot 32cm, £160, 0800 133 7560, falkculinair.co.uk

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Hessian Garden Sack, £4.50, 01342 823921, pipii.co.uk

Kingham Table with Galvanised Top, £700, 0845 608 4448, gardentrading.co.uk

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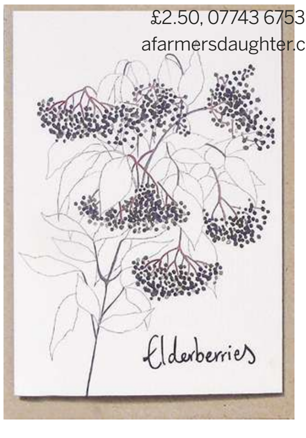
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Ceramic Growler, Gloss White, 64oz, £75, suchandsuch.co

Four Kilner Vintage Preserve Jars 1 Litre, £17.99, 01539 488100, lakeland.co.uk

Denim Apron, £45, 0333 400 5200, toa.st

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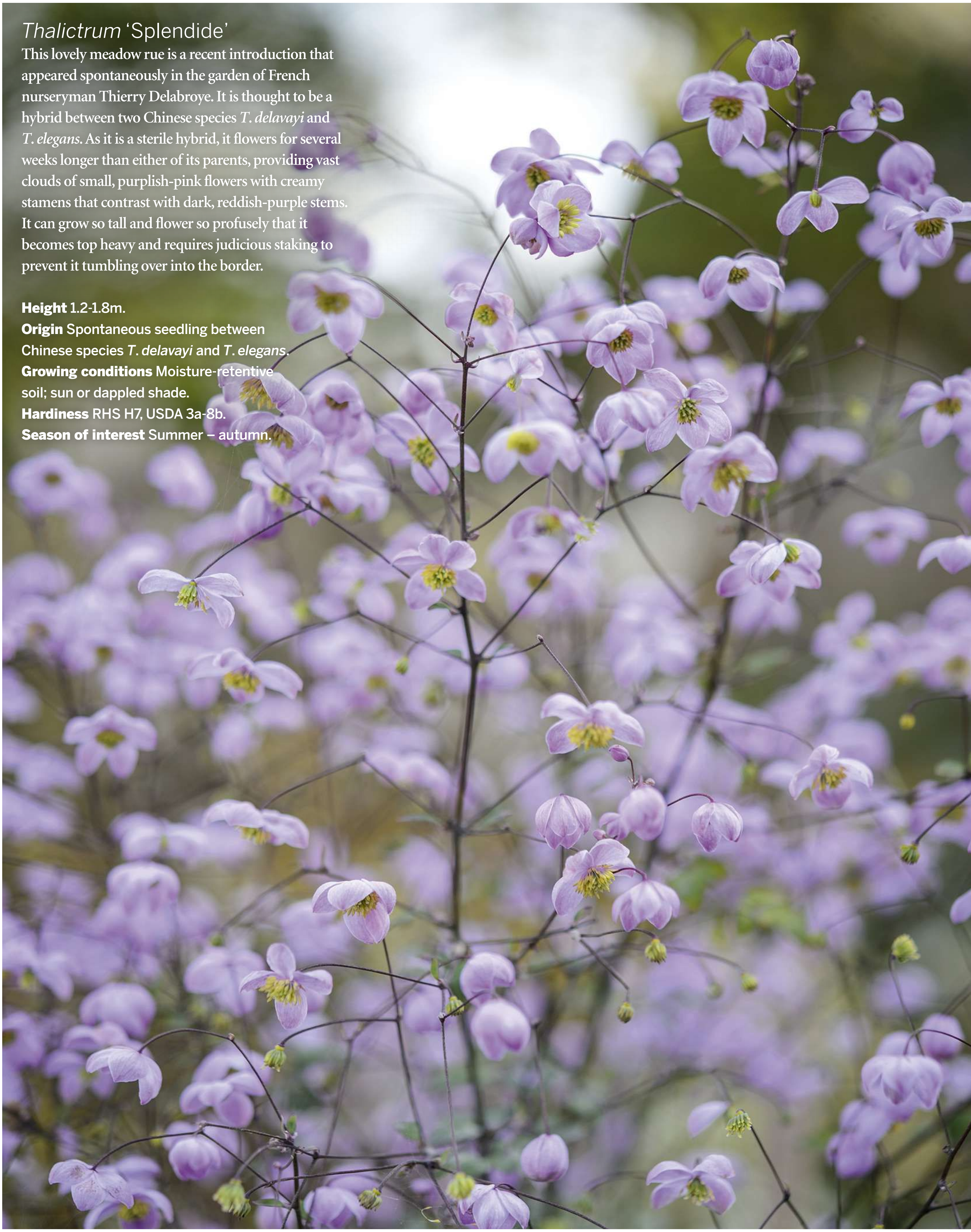
Thalictrum 'Splendide'

This lovely meadow rue is a recent introduction that appeared spontaneously in the garden of French nurseryman Thierry Delabroye. It is thought to be a hybrid between two Chinese species *T. delavayi* and *T. elegans*. As it is a sterile hybrid, it flowers for several weeks longer than either of its parents, providing vast clouds of small, purplish-pink flowers with creamy stamens that contrast with dark, reddish-purple stems. It can grow so tall and flower so profusely that it becomes top heavy and requires judicious staking to prevent it tumbling over into the border.

Height 1.2-1.8m.
Origin Spontaneous seedling between Chinese species *T. delavayi* and *T. elegans*.
Growing conditions Moisture-retentive soil; sun or dappled shade.
Hardiness RHS H7, USDA 3a-8b.
Season of interest Summer – autumn.

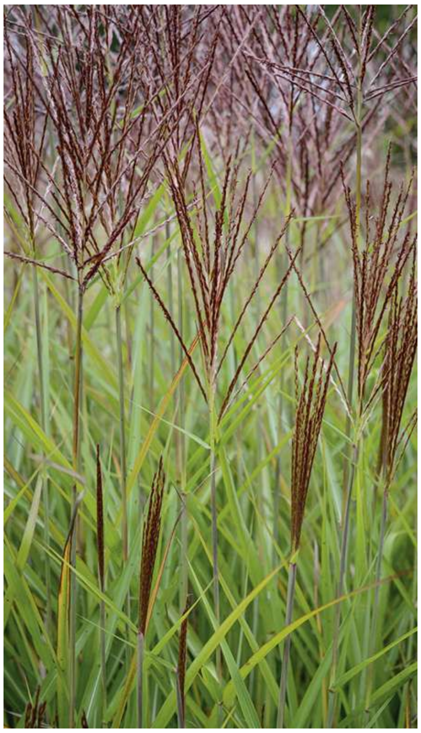


Marina Christopher is a plantswoman who owns Phoenix Perennial Plants in Hampshire*.

September plants

Although summer is nearing its end, there are still plenty of colourful plants that will ensure your garden remains fresh and bright

WORDS MARINA CHRISTOPHER PHOTOGRAPHS JASON INGRAM



Miscanthus sinensis 'Rotfuchs'

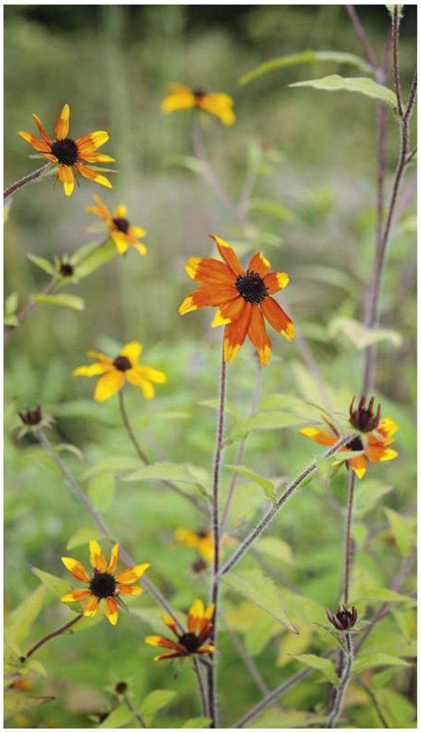
In a wet growing season many *Miscanthus sinensis* cultivars exhibit strong red and purple hues in the inflorescence, which can be almost buff in a dry season. This one will reliably produce strongly coloured, deep reddish-purple flowers with orange stamens whatever the weather. They contrast well with the more airy heads of other autumnal grasses, such as *Panicum virgatum*, *Molinia caerulea* and *Calamagrostis* x *acutiflora*. The flowers fade to browns and muted purple tones during the winter months.

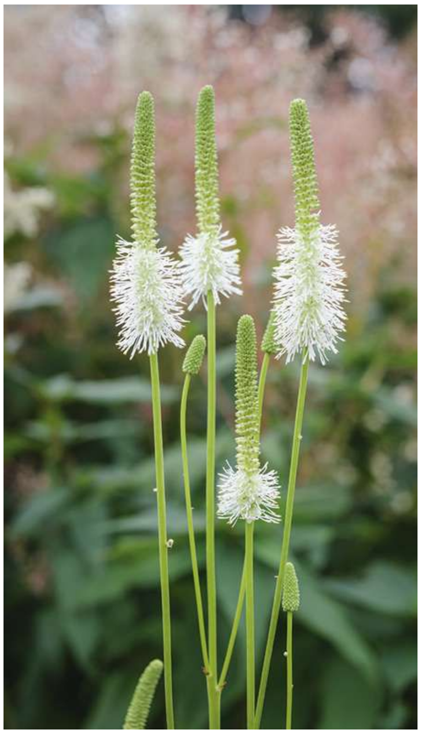
Height 1.5m.
Origin East Asia.
Growing conditions Not fussy, but not bone dry.
Hardiness RHS H6.
Season of interest Summer – winter.

Rudbeckia triloba 'Prairie Glow'

This delightful yellow daisy with a dark eye, colloquially named brown-eyed Susan, has smaller flowers than most rudbeckias but is tall with an airy, branched growth and multitudes of daisies in late summer. This seed strain, introduced in 2010, has striking dark-red stems and flowers that start off yellowish-orange with the orange and rusty hues deepening as the blooms mature and the temperature decreases. Mixes well with tall grasses, as they fade into their autumn finery, but is short-lived.

Height 1.5m.
Origin Central-eastern USA.
Growing conditions Moisture-retentive soil, not too dry.
Hardiness RHS H7, USDA 3a-7b.
Season of interest Late summer – autumn.



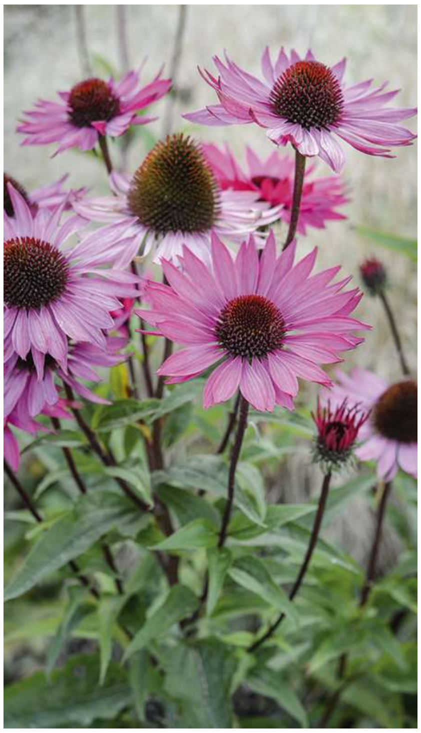


Sanguisorba canadensis

In the past few years burnets have rocketed in popularity with red, pink and white species and cultivars available. I've grown them for years and they are the most promiscuous plants I've ever known – hence the proliferation of named cultivars. An RHS trial of *Sanguisorba* in 2017 will help to assess the best for the garden, but this has already proved to be a fine species. It flowers in September with pristine, white candles emerging from erect, green flower spikes. It is wind pollinated and the slightest breeze sets the long stamens dancing.

Height 1.5-2m.
Origin Eastern North America.
Growing conditions Moisture-retentive soil; sun or dappled shade.
Hardiness RHS H5, USDA 3a-8b.
Season of interest Late summer – autumn.

*OPEN BY APPOINTMENT ONLY. EMAIL MARINA@PHOENIXPERENNIALPLANTS.CO.UK FOR DETAILS. †HOLDS AN AWARD OF GARDEN MERIT FROM THE ROYAL HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY.



Echinacea purpurea 'Fatal Attraction'

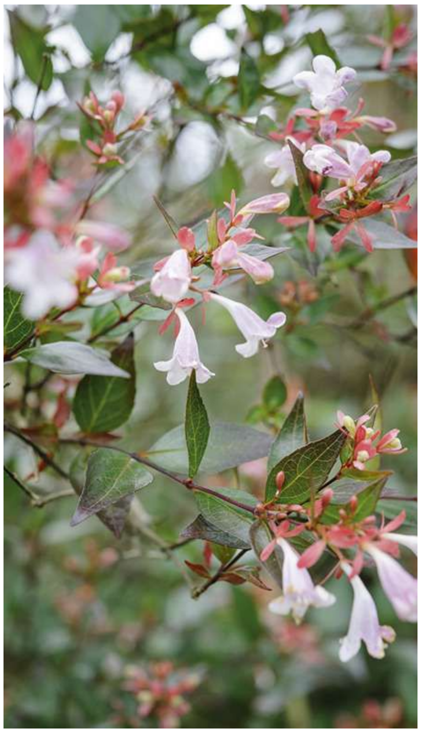
Many of the recently introduced hybrid echinaceas have proved very short-lived and need replacing on an almost annual basis. *E. purpurea* has always been a more reliable plant and this cultivar is an improvement on the type with dark-mahogany stems contrasting with deep pinkish-purple, daisy-like flowers with a dark cone and orange anthers. Coneflowers are very prone to the ravages of slugs and snails and do not like competition from other herbaceous plants. They do best isolated in large groups combining well with grasses.

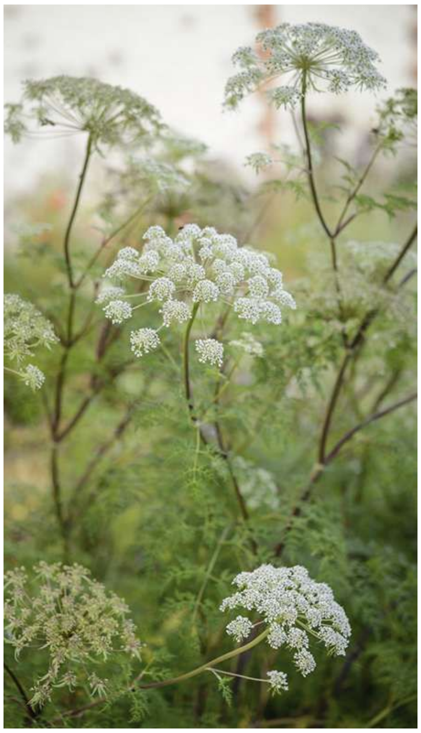
Height 90cm.
Origin Eastern USA.
Growing conditions Well-drained soil; sun.
Hardiness RHS H7, USDA 3a-9b.
Season of interest Summer – late autumn.

Abelia x grandiflora 'Lake Maggiore'

I've known and loved this beautiful arching shrub for several years but had never grown it until I moved to my current garden, which is in a frost pocket, meaning many of my plants flower a week or two later in the spring and again in the autumn as temperatures drop quite rapidly. This blooms through late August and into mid-October with delicately fragrant clusters of pale-pink tubular flowers with a contrasting dark-pink calyx. AGM[†].

Height 2m.
Origin Hybrid of *A. chinensis* x *A. uniflora*. Raised in Italy.
Growing conditions Moisture-retentive soil; sun or dappled shade.
Hardiness RHS H5, USDA 5a-9b.
Season of interest Spring – autumn.





Selinum wallichianum

Umbellifers keep popping up in my repertoire of favourite plants as their foliage is a great foil for more flamboyant subjects. This white-flowered, cow-parsley relative, with dome-shaped umbels, distinct deep-red stems and very finely dissected pale-green ferny leaves, flowers in July and August providing a cool green and white backdrop to the colourful perennials of high summer. In autumn the architectural structure persists, giving an excellent template for spider's webs and contrasting well with vertical shapes. AGM.

Height 1.5m.
Origin Kashmir, Himalayas, India, Pakistan.
Growing conditions Moisture-retentive soil; sun or dappled shade.
Hardiness RHS H7, USDA 6b-10b.
Season of interest Summer – late autumn.

Places to visit

Recommended places to see seasonal plants at their best

British gardens, which are traditionally excellent through spring and into summer, often lack momentum through late summer and autumn. However, since the mid-1990s when the naturalistic movement became popular in the UK, several glorious gardens now reach their peak in the autumn.

Sussex Prairie Garden is one such gem; an eight-acre garden created in the naturalistic style by Paul and Pauline McBride in 2008 with a large group of friends and family helping to plant many thousands of perennials and grasses. The borders are planted in the shape of a spiralling nautilus shell and you can wander through the beds to get a real flavour of naturalistic planting on a vast scale. The garden is open with many

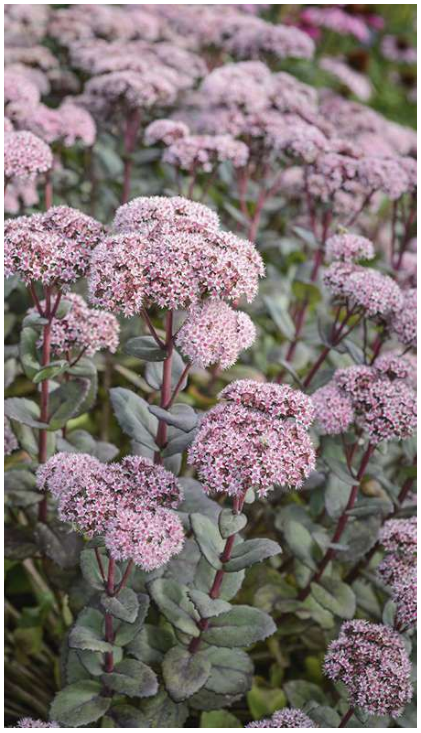
Sussex Prairie Garden.

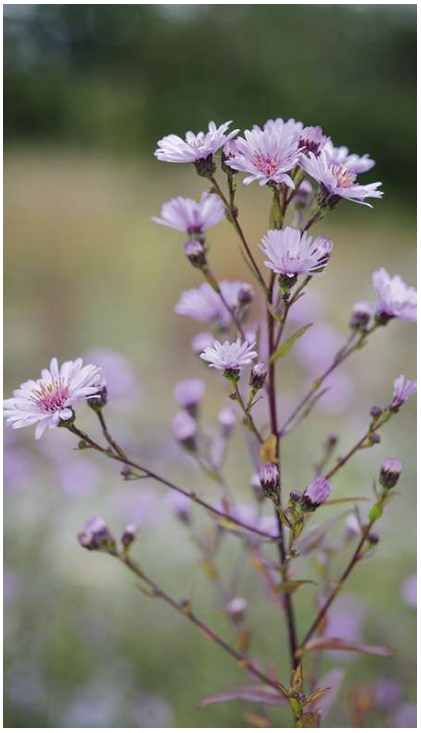
© THE GALLOPING GARDENER

Sedum 'Matrona'

This is a robust border stonecrop with broad and rounded pinkish-green suffused leaves and an upright habit. Large flat plates of greenish-white-tipped pink buds open to rose-pink flowers in summer and persist well into autumn. Many mature border sedums have a tendency to open up, displaying a rather ugly bare centre but this cultivar usually remains as a tight clump so is a good choice as a border perennial. It is also very attractive to honey bees and can often be heard before it is seen, thanks to all the industrious insect activity. AGM.

Height 90cm.
Origin Raised by Ewald Hügin in Freiburg, Germany.
Growing conditions Well-drained soil; sun.
Hardiness RHS H7, USDA 4a-8b.
Season of interest Late spring – winter.





Symphyotrichum 'Bee Lee Elliot'

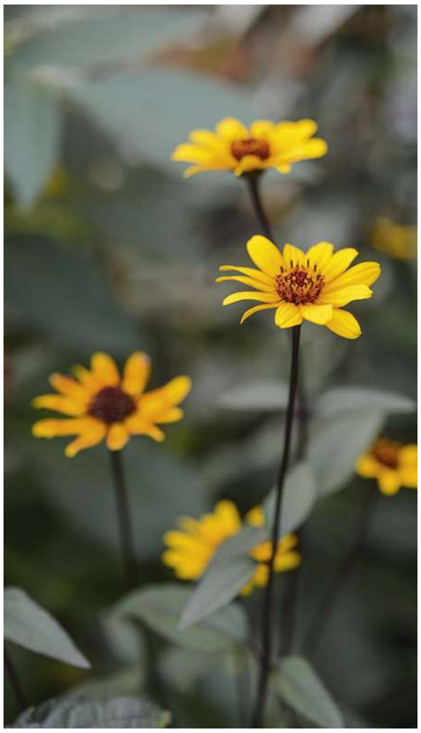
I obtained this delightful plant (formerly classified as an aster) from Mathieu Vermes' nursery in France. It is mildew-free with a rather sparse, twiggy aspect and a profusion of small, lilac-purple flowers from tight buds. The dark stems add an interesting contrast to dark-green, slender foliage. Flowers open with a yellow central disc and once pollinated change to a dusky red. Bees can't see red so once the blooms are pollinated, they ignore them so they don't waste energy. How incredible is nature?

Height 75cm.
Origin Raised by Mathieu Vermes in France.
Growing conditions Most soils, not too dry; sun.
Hardiness RHS H7.
Season of interest Late summer – autumn.

Heliopsis helianthoides var. *scabra* 'Summer Nights'

This cheerful yellow daisy is a close relative of the sunflower, *Helianthus*, but with much smaller flowers. It is a rather leggy plant with deep mahogany-red stems and dark-green leaves with deep-yellow blooms and a contrasting orange eye that turns dark red on pollination, a charming combination. Spring foliage is usually suffused purple-red so it has a long season of interest. Its main drawback is that it is caviar to slugs and snails, and on my clay soil it is often razed to the ground as soon as the shoots emerge.

Height 1.2m.
Origin Raised by North Creek Nurseries, Pennsylvania, USA.
Growing conditions Well-drained soil; sun.
Hardiness RHS H7, USDA 4a-9b.
Season of interest Late spring – autumn.



interesting events and an Unusual Plant and Garden Fair on 3 September, 11am-5pm. Sussex Prairie Garden, Morlands Farm, Wheatsheaf Road, nr Henfield, West Sussex BN5 9AT. Tel 01273 495902, sussexprairies.co.uk

Another naturalistic garden you really shouldn't miss is **Scampston Walled Garden** in North Yorkshire. Designed by the renowned Dutch designer Piet Oudolf [see our feature on his most recent UK garden on page 30] in 1999, it is now acclaimed as one of the UK's finest contemporary gardens. Perennial meadow planting coexists seamlessly with more traditional areas and the garden is open to the public from Easter to October every year. Scampston Walled Garden, Estate Office, Scampston Hall, North Yorkshire YO17 8NG. Tel 01944 759111, scampston.co.uk

Scampston Walled Garden.

ALEX RAMSAY / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

If you want to see some of the best rudbeckias then the **National Plant Collection of Rudbeckia**, which is held in a six-acre plantsman's garden owned by Mr Brooks, is worth a visit. By appointment only. Holly Tree Cottage, Elton, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 2HQ. Tel 01568 770476.

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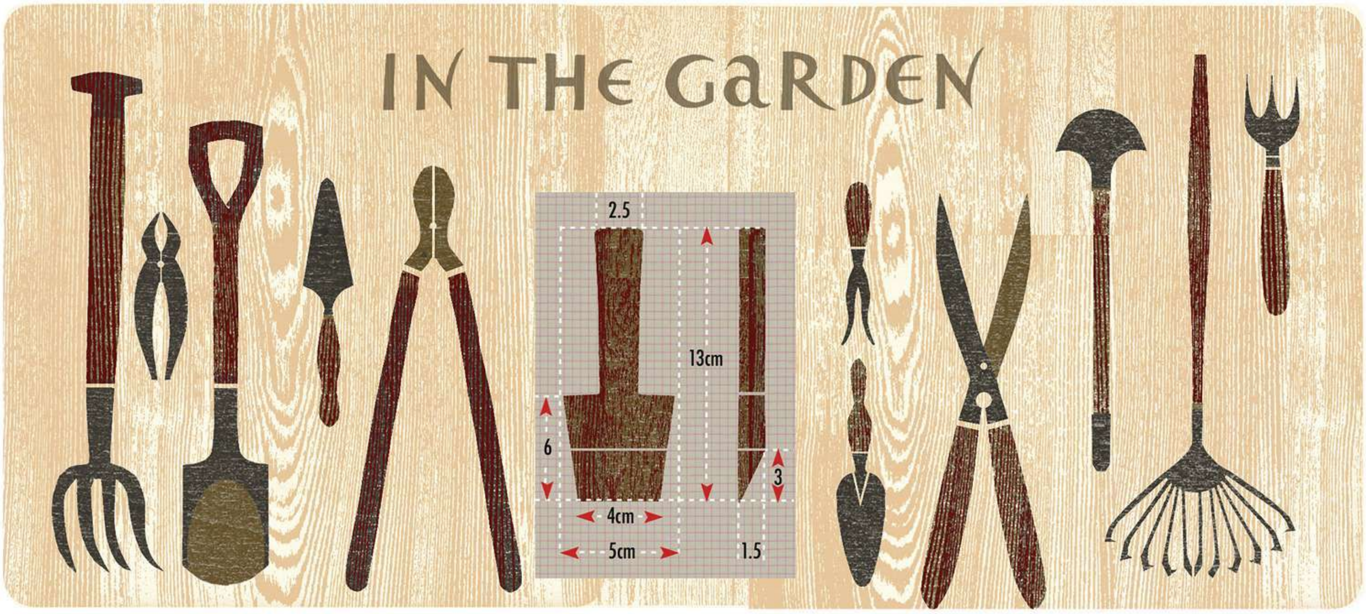


As autumn beckons, Jojo looks ahead and sows a bed of winter salad plants and considers making herself a 'man'

WORDS **JOJO TULLOH** ILLUSTRATIONS **SARAH YOUNG**

September is not a dynamic month in the garden. It's partly earth-inspired, the growing season is nearly over; weeds slow, the temperature drops and the sense of urgency dissipates. As the days shorten, it's easy to pause and admire the full-blown glory of a late-summer vegetable garden. But don't give up quite yet – clear a square of soil and sow a winter salad patch.

In 1699 the diarist, writer and gardener John Evelyn published his *Acetaria: A Discourse of Sallets*, probably the first book devoted entirely to salad. In it he describes the cultivation and composition of 44 different herbs and vegetables suitable for a year-round supply of salad. In his preface he remarks: 'Nor do I think, Men will ever reach the End, and far extended Limits of the Vegetable Kingdom, so incomprehensible is the Variety it every Day produces.'

What would be truly incomprehensible to Evelyn would be today's limited selection of salad on offer should he, by some wrinkle in time, find himself in the supermarket. Here are some less obvious leafy plants you can sow right now:

Mizuna (***Brassica rapa*** **subsp.** ***nipposinica*** **var.** ***laciniata***) Pretty, deeply cut leaves with white stems, grown in Japan – and pickled.

Minutina (***Plantago coronopus***) Also known as erba stella, this Italian heritage vegetable has an unusual mild, nutty flavour. Looks like jagged grass with horn-like bumps on the leaves. Its more common English name is buck's horn.

Celtuce (***Lactuca sativa*** **var.** ***asparagina***) Also known as asparagus lettuce, this is a sort of cross between celery and lettuce. You can eat the leaves but its main attraction is the stem, which can be eaten raw or cooked as you would celery. Sow indoors and then transplant.

Komatsuna (***Brassica rapa*** **Perviridis Group**) Also known as mustard spinach, this has glossy, dark-green leaves, a vigorous habit and good hardiness with a taste between cabbage and spinach. Larger leaves are excellent in stir-fries.

Texsel greens (***Brassica carinata***) These flavoursome leaves, derived from Ethiopian mustard, are rich in vitamin C. The small leaves are best, and they have a mild, spinach-like flavour.

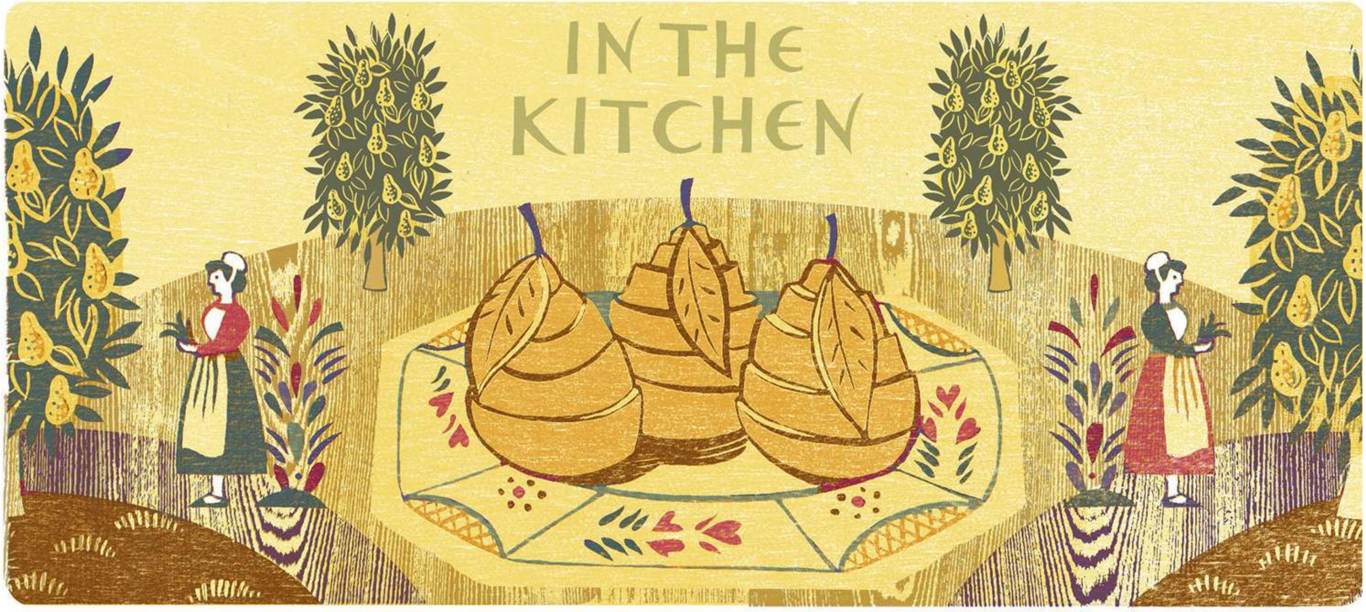
Butterhead lettuces (***Lactuca sativa***) Both the cultivars 'All Year Round' and 'Marvel of Four Seasons' are suitable for autumn sowing – the latter has green leaves tinged with bronze red.

Turnip greens (***Brassica rapa***) You can sow any unused turnip seeds now and harvest as mildly spicy greens during the winter months.

Winter purslane (***Claytonia perfoliata***) The saucer-like perfoliate leaves wrap the stem of this easy-to-grow, mild-tasting, succulent salad. It is also sometimes known as miner's lettuce. ▷

WHAT TO DO NOW

- Britain's damp and temperate climate means we as gardeners have great latitude for growing a wide range of vegetables. The downside to all the rain is that it's also good for making mud, which, if left on tools, can rust metal as it hardens. As the claggy months are nearly upon us, what is the best way to clean mud off your tools and boots? The answer is a 'man'. This looks like a small, angled wooden spade (pictured above, centre) and was invented by a now nameless navvy working on the UK's inland canals. As the navvies spaded their way across the country, they deemed clean tools as useful as an extra 'man' in a gang of 20. Use hardwood (oak or beech), shape with a saw, round the handles with a rasp and smooth with sandpaper then rub with linseed oil. Use the man to scrape the mud off your tools and boots. Keep an oily rag in your shed and give metal surfaces a rub before you put them away. Keep your 'man' hung up by two nails on your shed wall so you always know where it is. If only it were that easy to keep track of the other type of man.



Pears are the *Odalisque* of the orchard; part of our lexicon of shape yet strangely overlooked by cooks and their books. My granny's garden had just enough room for a solitary pear tree. Although ancient and unloved, it nevertheless bore fruit yearly, often producing large crops of hard, green pears. These she dealt with in a spirit of grim frugality, stewing and then freezing them into slabs, which she served up over the coming year with the air of someone who was doing her duty. The pear deserves so much better than this, for it lends itself to many different treatments, both savoury (with slices of blue cheese) and sweet (in tarts and conserves), raw, cooked and preserved. The oddest, and yet still toothsome, take on pears I have ever eaten was a griddled pear, kimchi and steak sandwich at a San Francisco lunch counter, however, if that's a step too far try one of these.

USEFUL COOKERY TIP

No. 9 *Aromatic apple pie*

When making apple pie, place a long curl of thinly pared lemon peel in among the apple to add a citrus undertone.

Make pickled pears to fit into a one-litre preserving jar. Take three to four ripe but not soft pears (approximately 600g), peel and quarter, place in a stainless steel pan, cover with cold water, bring to the boil and simmer for five minutes, draining and reserving the liquid. Measure out 500ml of liquid, return it to the pan with 250g sugar, 400ml cider vinegar, a scrape of nutmeg, one teaspoon of allspice berries, six cloves and a strip of lemon peel. Heat the mixture, stirring until the sugar has dissolved, then return the pears to the pan and simmer for half an hour. Put the pears and liquid in a bowl, cover and leave for 24 hours. Drain, then reheat the syrup to reduce it a little and pour over the pears in a preserving jar. Cool, then seal, leaving for a month before eating with cold meats.

For a pear salad, lightly toast 75g walnuts and break up roughly. Arrange a large bunch of watercress (stalks removed) and a head of 'Variegato di Castelfranco' or other chicory in a bowl and crumble in 100g of stilton or other blue cheese. Before serving, cut two crisp pears into thin slices and scatter over leaves, walnuts and cheese, and dress with a vinaigrette of olive oil and white wine vinegar. You could also try two thinly sliced pears, a small bunch of sliced radishes, about 300g flaked, hot smoked salmon dressed lightly with vinaigrette and served with a little horseradish cream on the side – accompanied by some rye bread.

To make an Italian pear conserve, take a kilogram of small, reddish pears, cored and quartered, the zest of one lemon and the juice of two, and two bay leaves. Cover (barely) with water and simmer until the fruit turns pinkish. Cool slightly then add 300g of sugar and boil until the fruits are translucent, adding several basil leaves. When the syrup is dense, pour into sterilised jars, cool and seal. □

RECIPES

Douillons aux poires. These pastry-covered pears are a speciality of Normandy. Some people stuff the pears with cinnamon, brown sugar or almond paste, or wrap the pastry round the pear like a removed peel – but start simple then experiment. **4 pears, ripe but firm**, **150g plain flour**, **80g butter**, **100g vanilla sugar** (sugar with a vanilla pod stored in its jar), **100ml acidulated water** (cold water into which you have squeezed **½ lemon**), **egg wash** (an egg beaten with a spoonful of milk). Cut the butter into small cubes, put into a bowl with the flour and refrigerate for at least 15 minutes. Add a pinch of salt and bring the flour and butter together with acidulated water. Gather the dough up into cling film, knead briefly through the cling film and refrigerate for 30 minutes. Preheat the oven to 200°C (Gas 6). Roll out the pastry to about 3mm thick and cut into four squares. Peel the pears and remove the core carefully, keeping the pear whole, and pop into a bowl of acidulated water. Pour out the vanilla sugar, remove the pears from the water, dry off and roll in the sugar. Put into the centre of the pastry square, gather pastry around the pear and seal with egg wash. Brush with egg wash and place on a greased baking tray, refrigerating again if time. Cook for 35-40 minutes until crisp and golden.

Wisley 2008 *(Aubreeze)*

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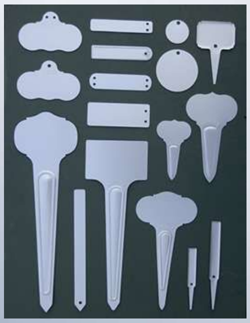

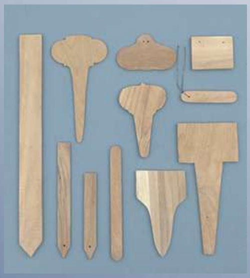

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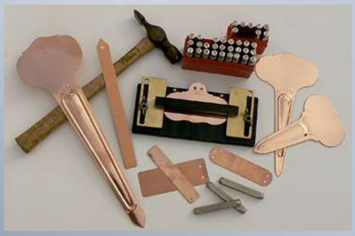

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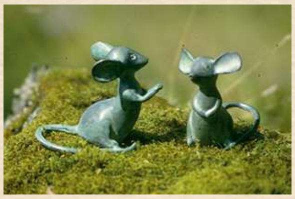
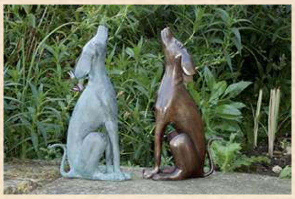
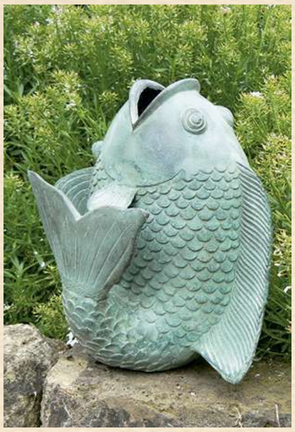
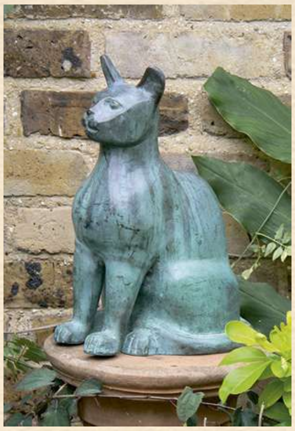
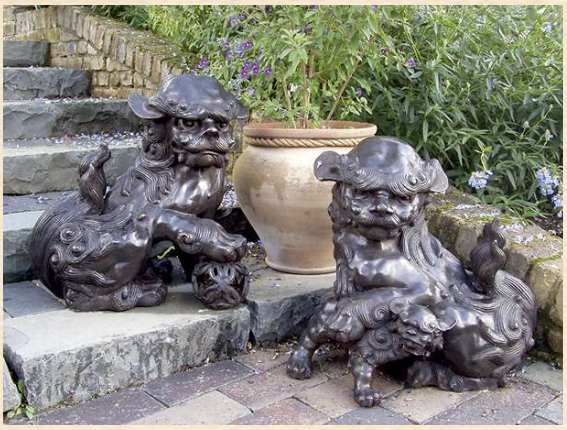

Pair of Mice 10 cms high


Moongazing Dogs 30 cms high


Fish Vase several sizes


Egyptian Cat 38 cms high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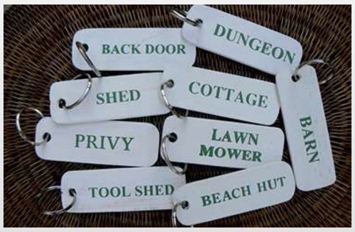
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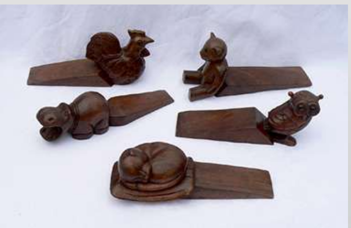
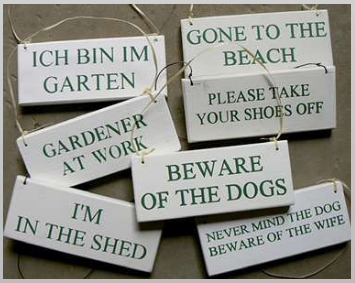
Wooden Keyrings : 95 Locations


Wooden Doorstops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I'M IN THE SHED
NEVER MIND THE DOG BEWARE OF THE WIFE
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Stone Bowls

Wooden Hanging Baskets

33 Bourne Lane, Much Hadham, Herts SG10 6ER, UK. Tel 01279 842685

Carl Jones

As head gardener on a private Cotswold estate, Carl is responsible for 50 acres of grounds and enjoys taking an active role in all the varied horticultural activities required

PORTRAIT ANDREW MONTGOMERY

Earliest gardening memory My Nan getting me to look up plants in a little Collins plant-identifying book; the first plant was speedwell.
First plant love Growing vegetables as a 14-year-old on work experience. It opened my eyes to the origins of food and made me actually enjoy vegetables. Impressive effect for a 14-year-old boy.
Who are your horticultural heroes? Having worked on private estates my whole career I am eternally grateful to, and have been inspired by, my employers. We're all lucky they are able to invest in a garden, not for profit, but for passion and turn their passions into reality – and their commitment to horticulture is commendable. Also, Geoff Hamilton and Alan Titchmarsh. It may not be trendy to mention them, but they inspired a nation to appreciate horticulture.
Three most worthwhile tips for every gardener Observe all the time and take in your surroundings, keep noticing to improve. Review your year and implement better ways to do things next time. Pick good tools, not necessarily expensive just comfortable and ergonomic. My fork has lasted me 24 years so far.
Most valuable training I did a horticultural course at Sparsholt College at a young age, which gave me a great basis to start from.
Dream plant destination England; we are so lucky to have such wonderful gardens and countryside. I've travelled a lot and nowhere in the world is so exciting horticulturally as home.
Favourite planting style I've worked with designers Jinny Blom and Tom Stuart-Smith and they really do create gardens that I like. I love plants, flowers and the seasons. If a garden can get a good mix and year-long interest that is always the goal.
Unsung hero of the plant world Native trees: they are often walked past unnoticed, but they are the life-blood of our environment. Everyone should appreciate them and protect them.
What principles have guided your attitude to gardening? Constant and never-ending improvement. It's a motto I try to live my life by and it is the source of my gardening motivation.
Favourite gardening book *The RHS Encyclopaedia of Plants & Flowers*: it has been my go-to book for 24 years. No matter what experience you have you should always refresh your mind with a book. □
Contact carlwjones@hotmail.com

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designer garden

Field of dreams

Piet Oudolf has transformed a blank, rectangular plot into a colourful, perennial meadow full of character at the Hauser & Wirth art gallery in Somerset

WORDS ANNA PAVORD PHOTOGRAPHS JASON INGRAM

In brief

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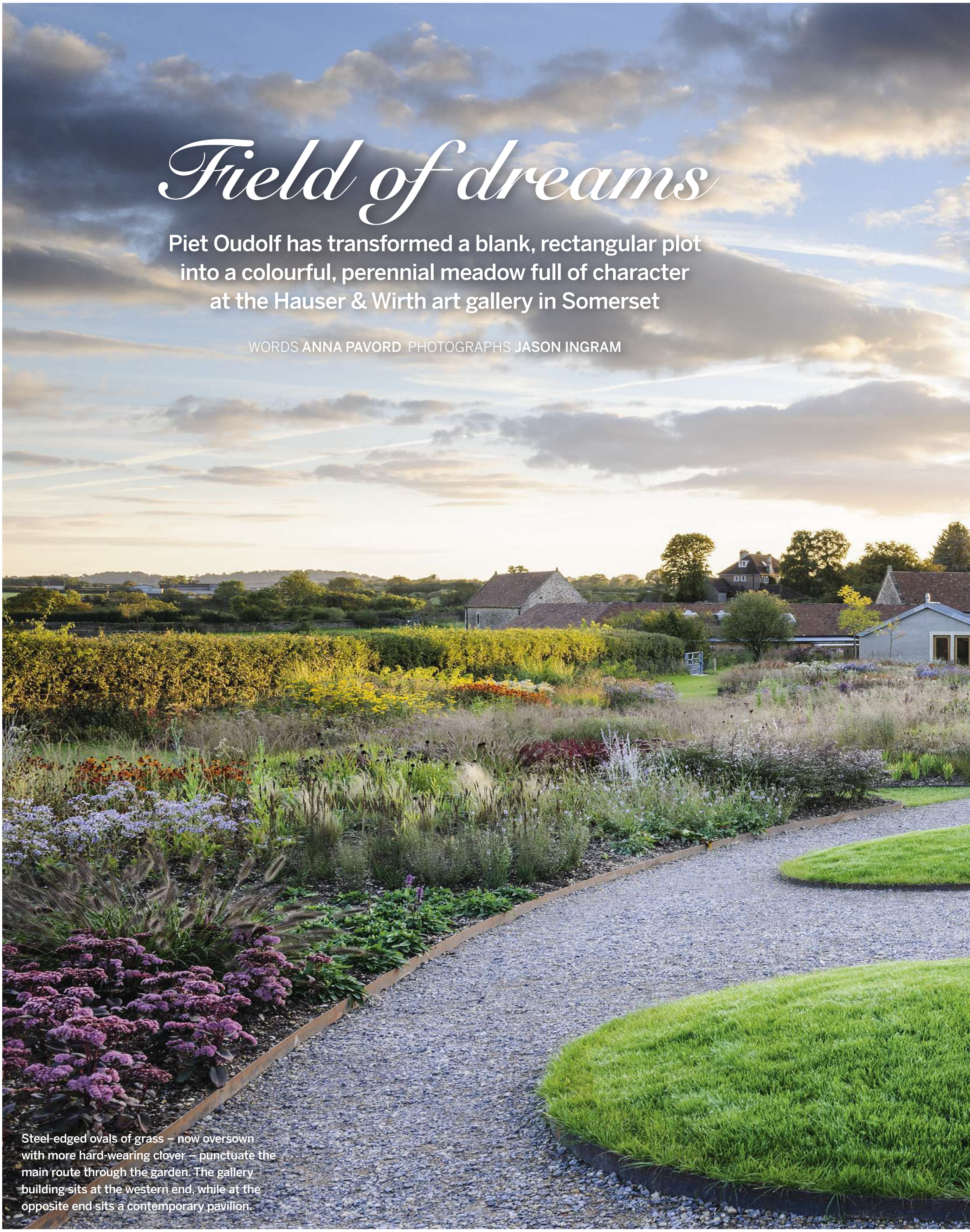
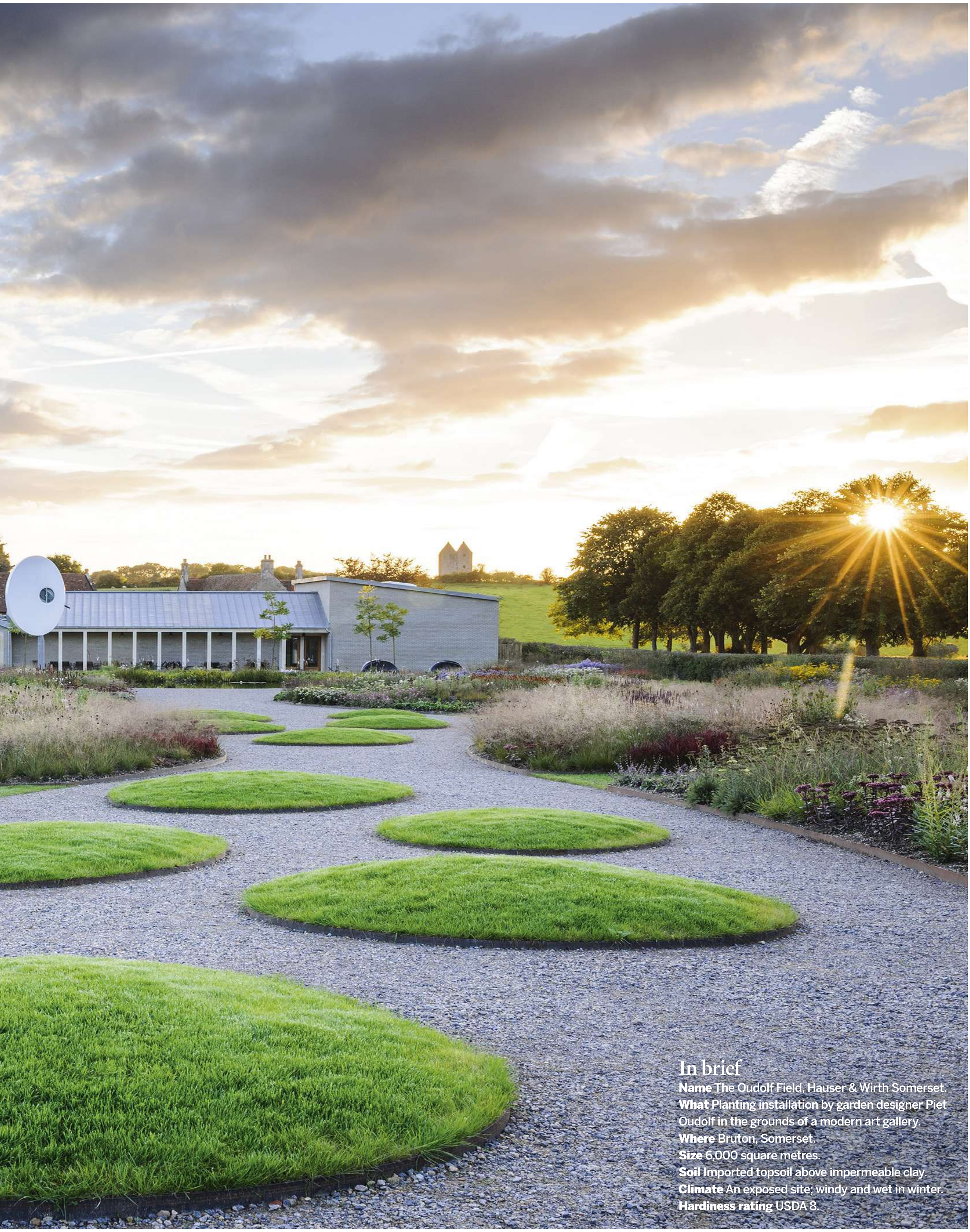
Field of dreams

Piet Oudolf has transformed a blank, rectangular plot into a colourful, perennial meadow full of character at the Hauser & Wirth art gallery in Somerset

WORDS **ANNA PAVORD** PHOTOGRAPHS **JASON INGRAM**



Steel-edged ovals of grass – now oversown with more hard-wearing clover – punctuate the main route through the garden. The gallery building sits at the western end, while at the opposite end sits a contemporary pavilion.



In brief

Name The Oudolf Field, Hauser & Wirth Somerset.
What Planting installation by garden designer Piet Oudolf in the grounds of a modern art gallery.
Where Bruton, Somerset.
Size 6,000 square metres.
Soil Imported topsoil above impermeable clay.
Climate An exposed site; windy and wet in winter.
Hardiness rating USDA 8.

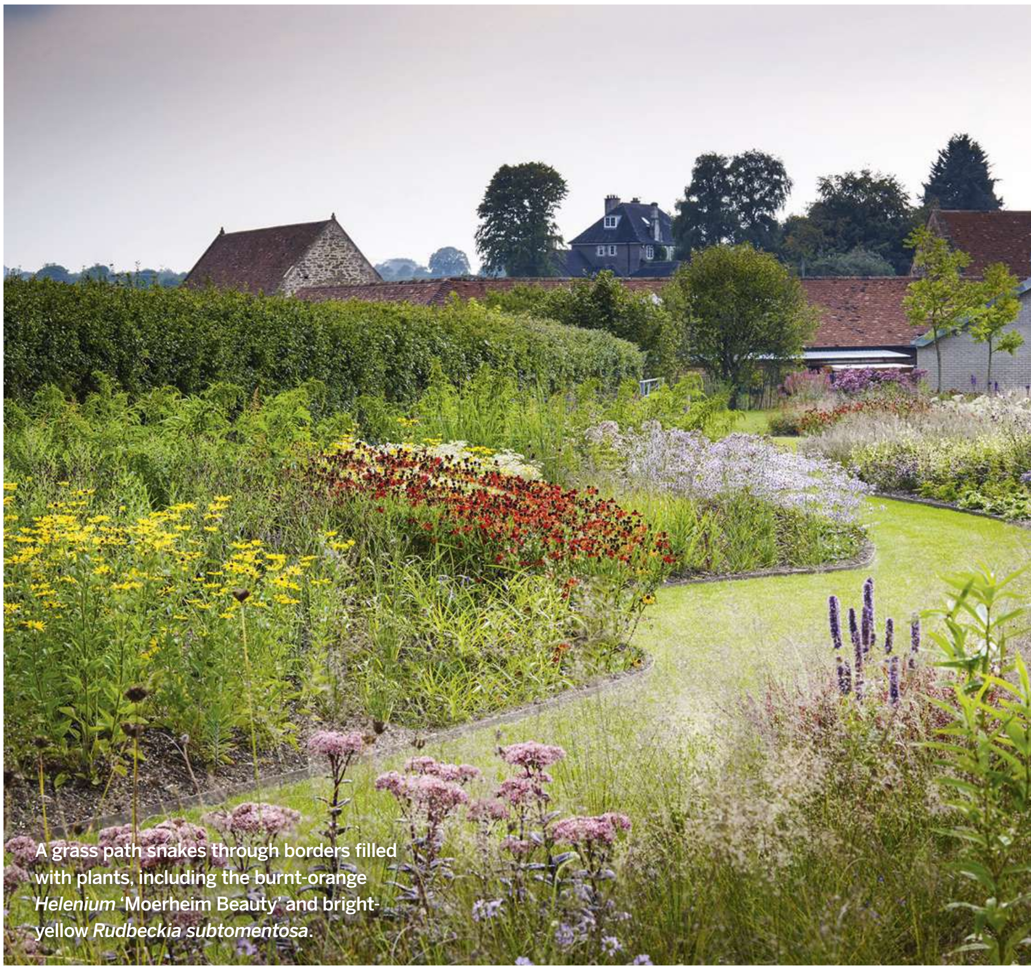
"Colour is in the back of my head," says master designer and plantsman Piet Oudolf. "Not on my tongue – I don't speak colour." We are talking about the grandiloquently named Oudolf Field, which opened on 14 September 2014 as a thrilling adjunct to a new Hauser & Wirth art gallery on the outskirts of Bruton, Somerset. I've been asking Piet about the palette of plants he chose for the site, and how he arranges them. "Colour is so short," he goes on. "I look at the form of a flower, and how it will last."

The style of planting here is that of a perennial meadow, laid out in 17 curving, interlocking beds divided by a broad, gravelled walk. Originally, the Field really was a field – a plain, long, uncultivated rectangle sloping up and away from a handsome collection of stone farm buildings. Swiss couple Iwan and Manuela Wirth added a contemporary art gallery and asked Piet to provide a master plan for the whole site.

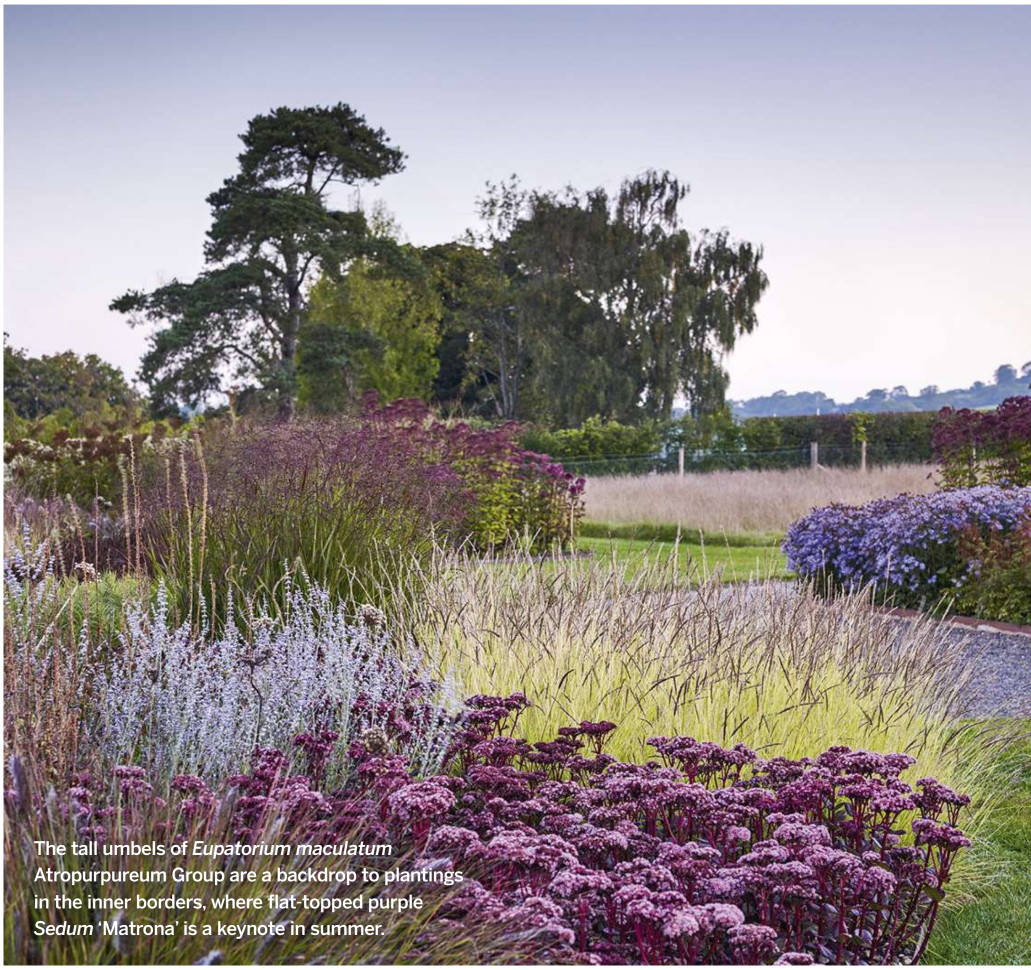
You see immediately why it is not called a garden. It is uncompromisingly faithful to its setting; the field stretches out like a huge, flat canvas that Piet has painted in great swoops of perennial plants, with no intervening trees or shrubs. In spring there are camassias and alliums, but the planting is designed to reach a thundering crescendo in summer, with rudbeckias and echinaceas, heleniums and sedums, actaeas and veronicastrums.

The beds are carefully orchestrated, as you would expect from a designer as experienced as Piet. When you first emerge into the Field by way of the cloister behind the gallery, the scale of the planting stretching ahead is overwhelming. From this viewpoint, the grass paths between the beds disappear, one merges seamlessly into the next, and only the fluid lines of the main path seem to offer a way through. One is tempted to say 'the central path' but it is actually set slightly to one side, with more beds to the left of it than to the right. Gradually your eye starts to distinguish differences in the way the plants are used. Some, such as achillea and aster, sedum and sesleria, appear in all the beds, though in different cultivars. Slowly you realise that the Field is laid out in three

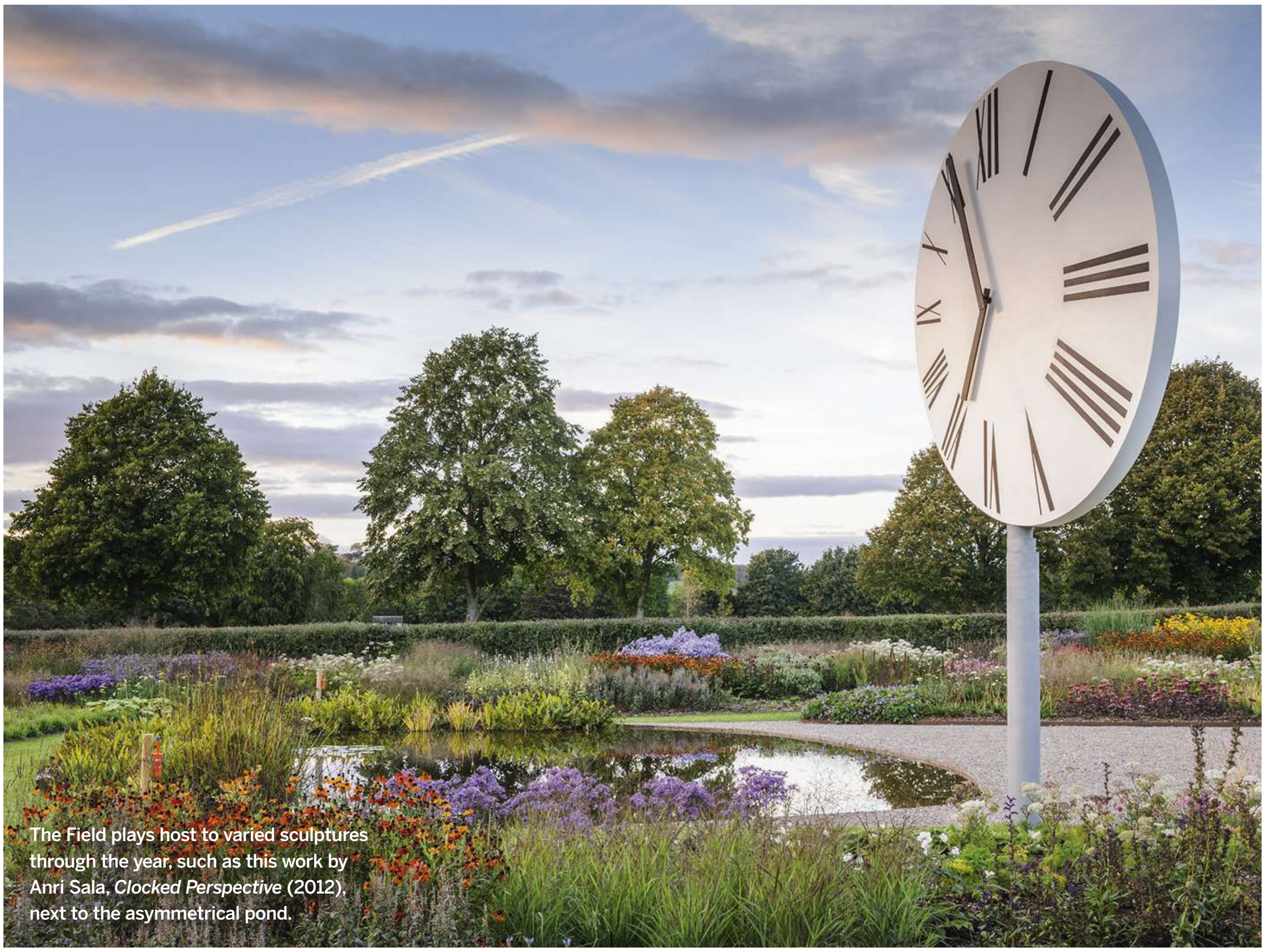
To continue turn to page 36 ▷



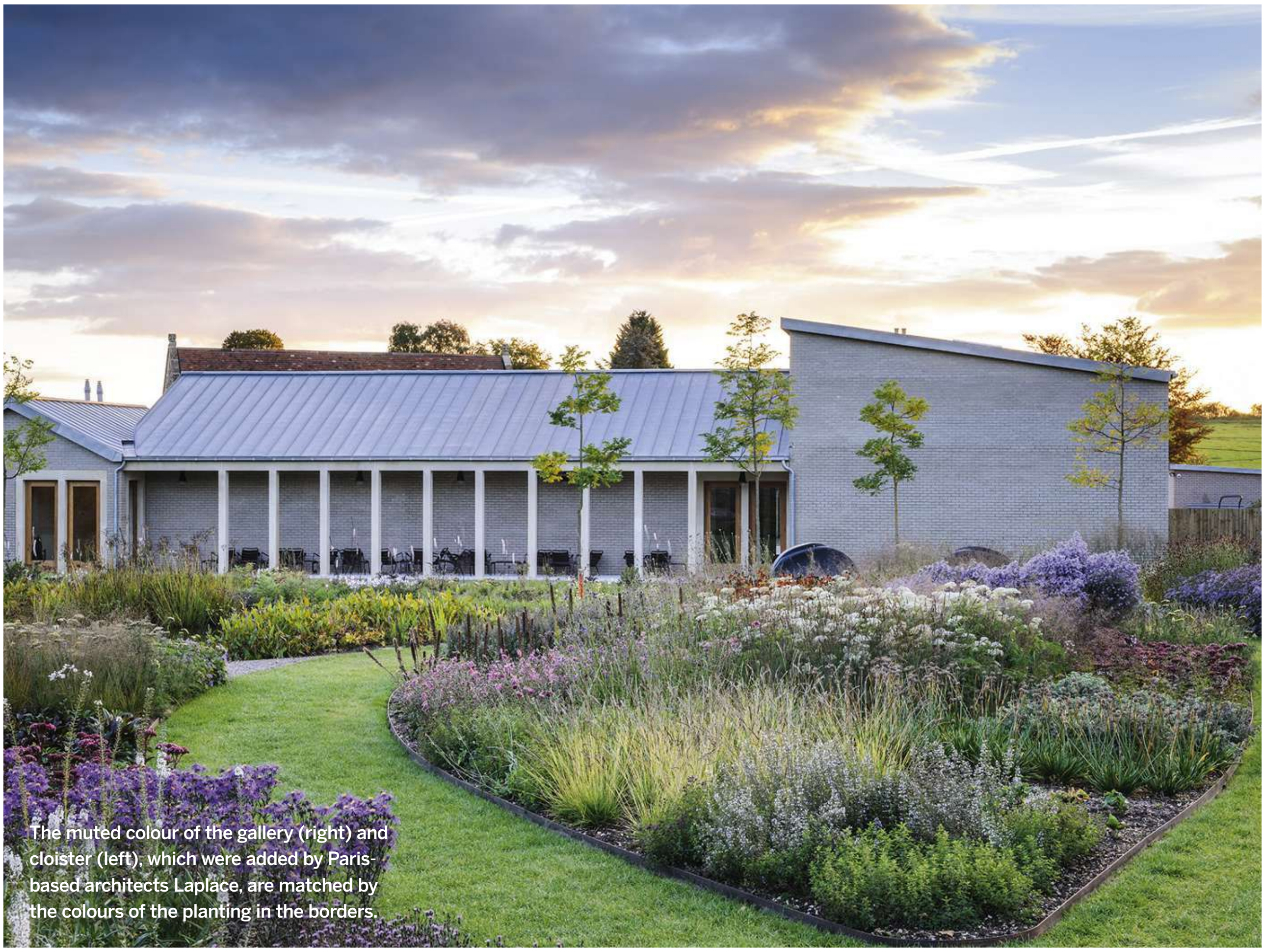
A grass path snakes through borders filled with plants, including the burnt-orange *Helenium* 'Moerheim Beauty' and bright-yellow *Rudbeckia subtomentosa*.



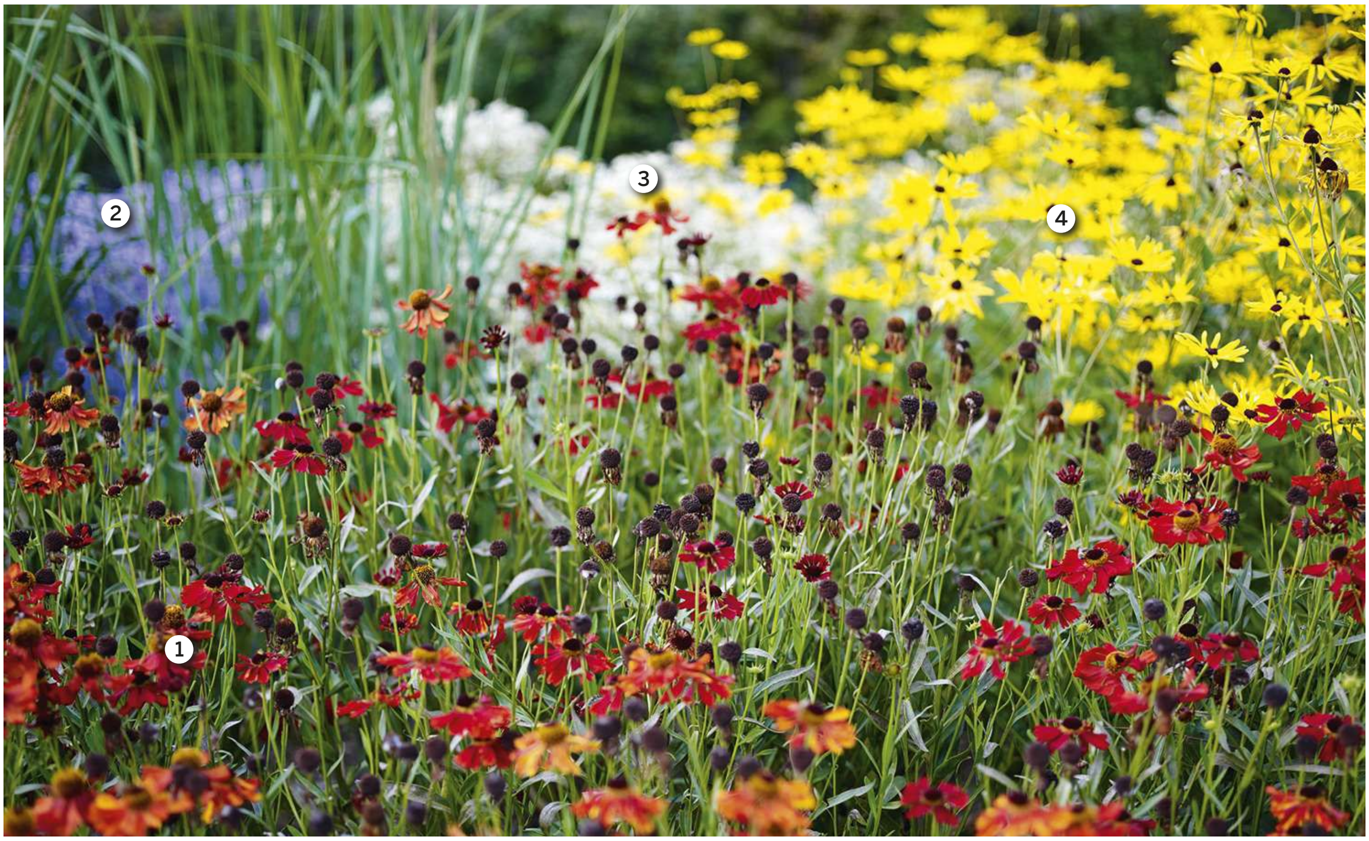
The tall umbels of *Eupatorium maculatum* Atropurpureum Group are a backdrop to plantings in the inner borders, where flat-topped purple *Sedum* 'Matrona' is a keynote in summer.



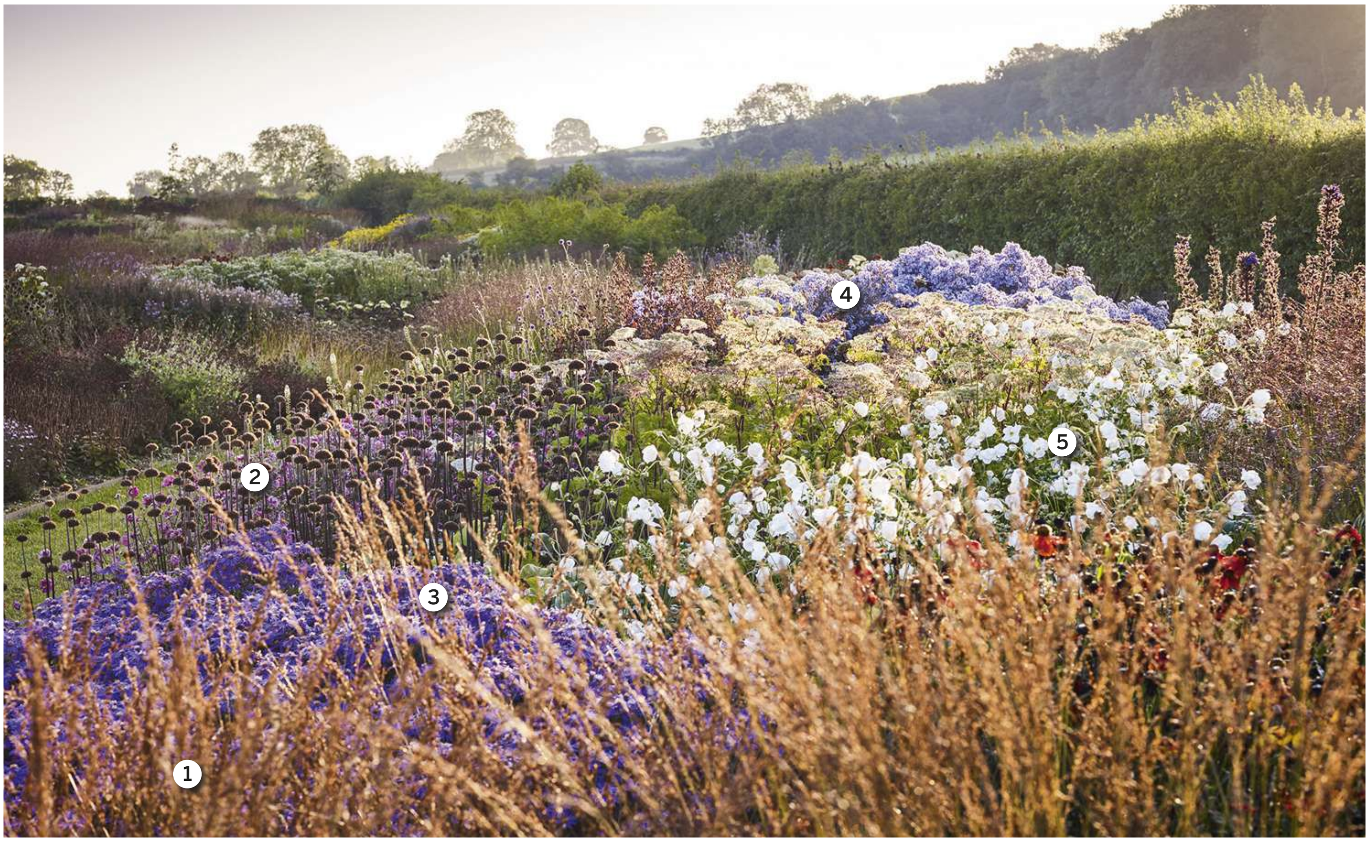
The Field plays host to varied sculptures through the year, such as this work by Anri Sala, *Clocked Perspective* (2012), next to the asymmetrical pond.



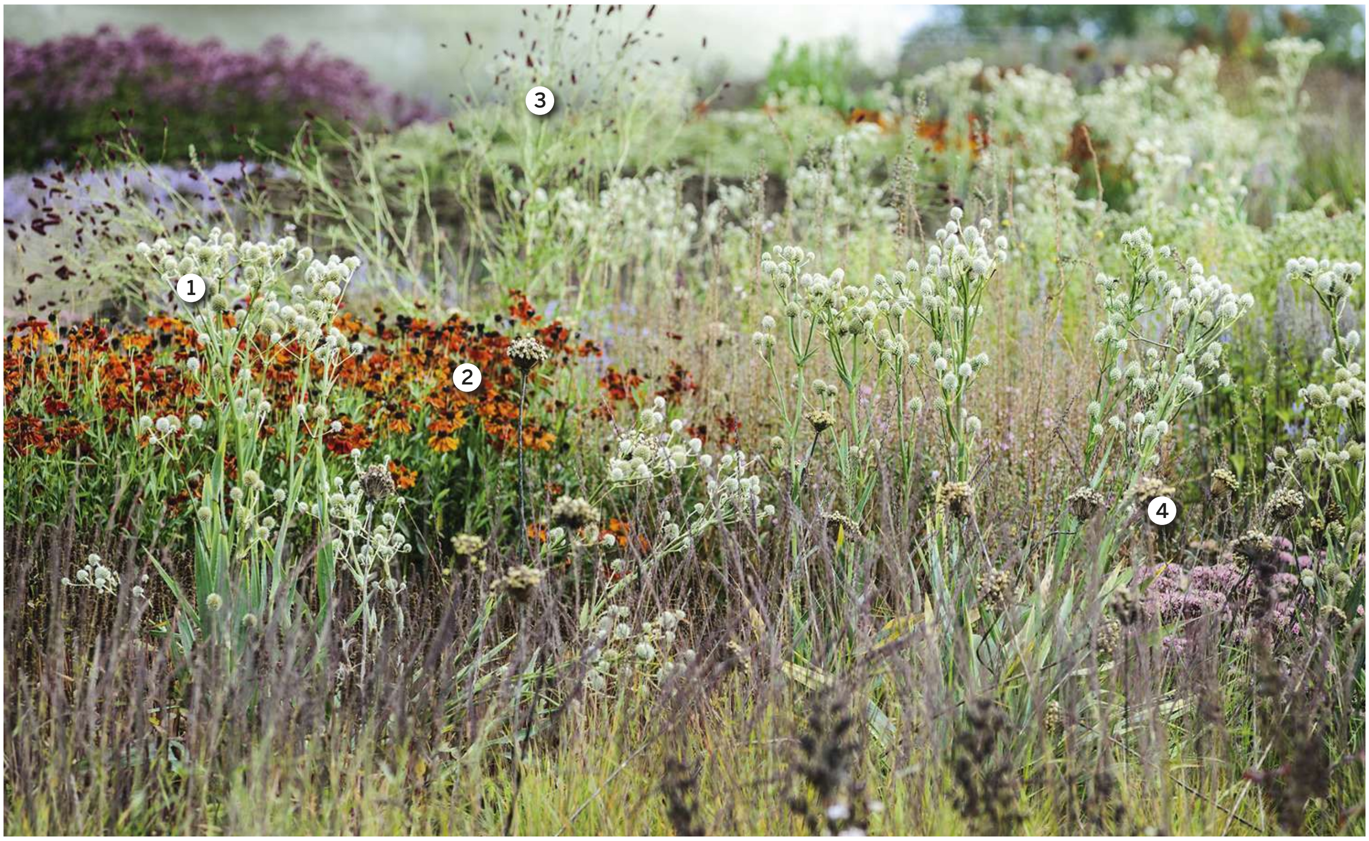
The muted colour of the gallery (right) and cloister (left), which were added by Paris-based architects Laplace, are matched by the colours of the planting in the borders.



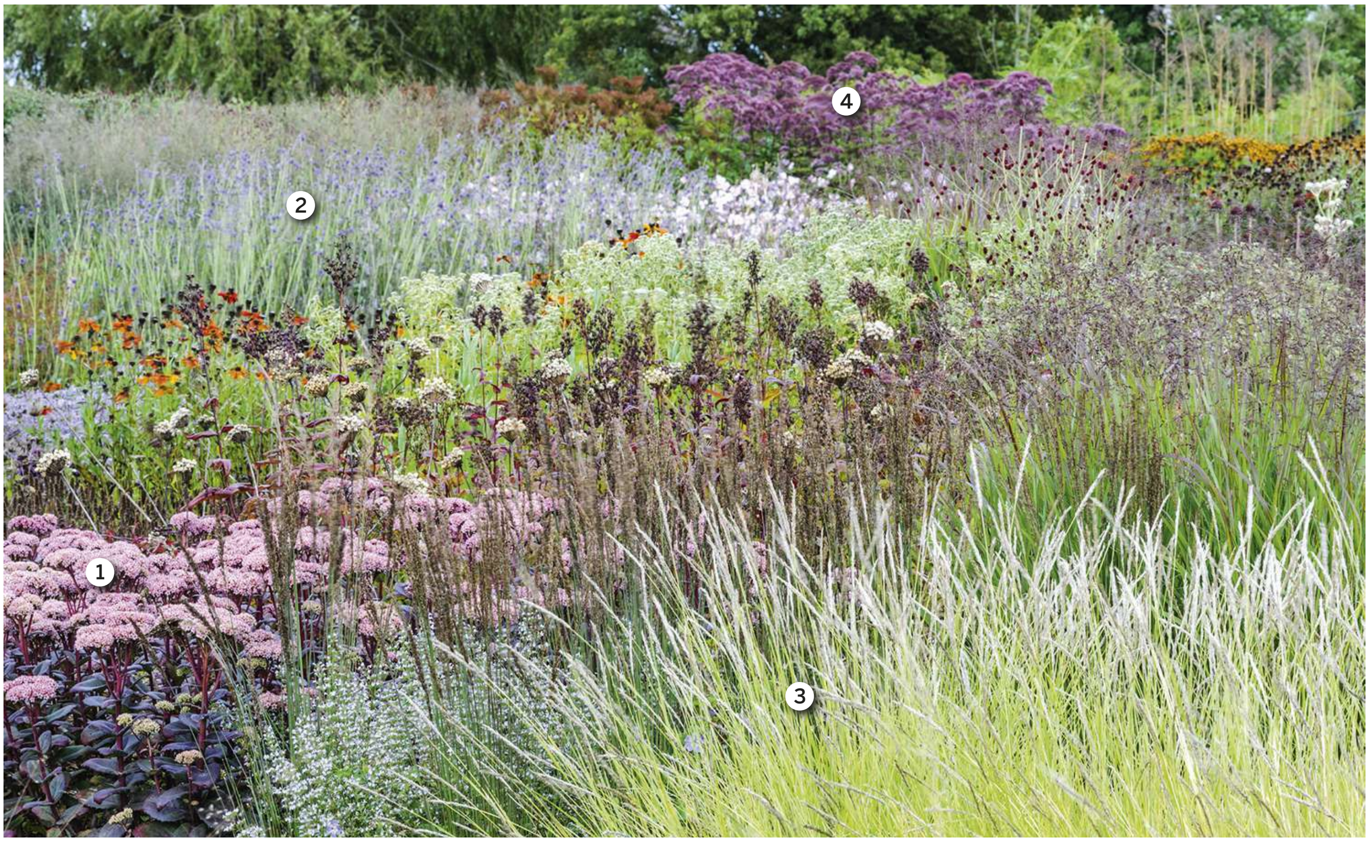
Colour combo Heleniums are stalwarts of the late-summer border and the old cultivar ***H.* 'Moerheim Beauty' (1)** is still one of the best, with rich mahogany petals swirling downwards from the dark-brown central boss. In a narrow side border its colour is cooled slightly by a misty mass of blue ***Eurybia* x *herveyi* (2)** and the white daisy ***Doellingeria umbellata* (3)**. At the other end of the border the boldly branching stems of the sweet coneflower, yellow ***Rudbeckia subtomentosa* (4)** add balance to the helenium. Both of these have seedheads that will last through the winter.



Pale and interesting Muted tones predominate in this generous curving border by the hedge on the southern boundary of the Oudolf Field. In the foreground is a selection of the purple moor-grass ***Molinia caerulea* 'Edith Dudszus' (1)**, its fine plumes provide an excellent contrast with the knobbed seedheads of ***Phlomis russeliana* (2)**. Creating soft pools of mauve are ***Aster amellus* 'Sonora' (3)** and, at the far end, the taller, reclassified aster ***Symphyotrichum* 'Little Carlow' (4)**. In between is ***Anemone* x *hybrida* 'Honorine Jobert' (5)**, an old cultivar but still one of the best with white petals around a shining golden eye.



Textured tufts This bed at the top end of the Oudolf Field is dominated by the striking pale bobbles of ***Eryngium yuccifolium* (1)** above its spiny blue-grey leaves. The soft, hazy colours are punctuated by the bronze-mahogany flowers of ***Helenium* 'Moerheim Beauty' (2)**, one of Piet's favourite plants. Towering over its companions is the aptly named ***Sanguisorba officinalis* 'Red Buttons' (3)**, one of the fast-growing family of burnets that have deservedly become favourites in New Perennial plantings. The dried heads of ***Allium nigrum* (4)**, which provided colour earlier in the season, will stand throughout the winter.



Subtle lines The grass paths that separate the different beds disappear altogether in this long view over the planting at the top end of the Oudolf Field. At one end is ***Sedum* 'Matrona' (1)**, with its purple flowers and dusky foliage, which flowers over a long period in late summer. Its colour is contrasted with the grey-blue of ***Perovskia* 'Little Spire' (2)** and the silvery-green flowers of ***Sesleria autumnalis* (3)**, which are held above bright foliage. At the far end, the purple of the sedum's foliage is echoed in a giant stand of Joe Pye weed, ***Eupatorium maculatum* Atropurpureum Group (4)**, used as a backstop in the furthest corner of the field.

▷ different zones. The bottom four beds closest to the gallery building share one palette of plants, while the top three have a subtly different combination that includes amsonia, nepeta and perovskia, for instance, not used in the lower beds.

The central section, comprising three beds that lie either side of the wide path, is in a completely different, grassier style, dominated by the prairie dropseed, *Sporobolus heterolepis*. Here, the planting comes closest to a natural meadow (an American meadow, that is) for this dropseed is a native of prairies stretching from Colorado to Québec. Here, the grassy backdrop is punctuated by large drifts of pale pink *Monarda bradburyana*, another American native, and the dark flowers of *Iris chrysographes* 'Black Knight' with *Sedum telephium* 'Coral Reef' and red-orange *Achillea* 'Feuerland' adding extra flower power in late summer.

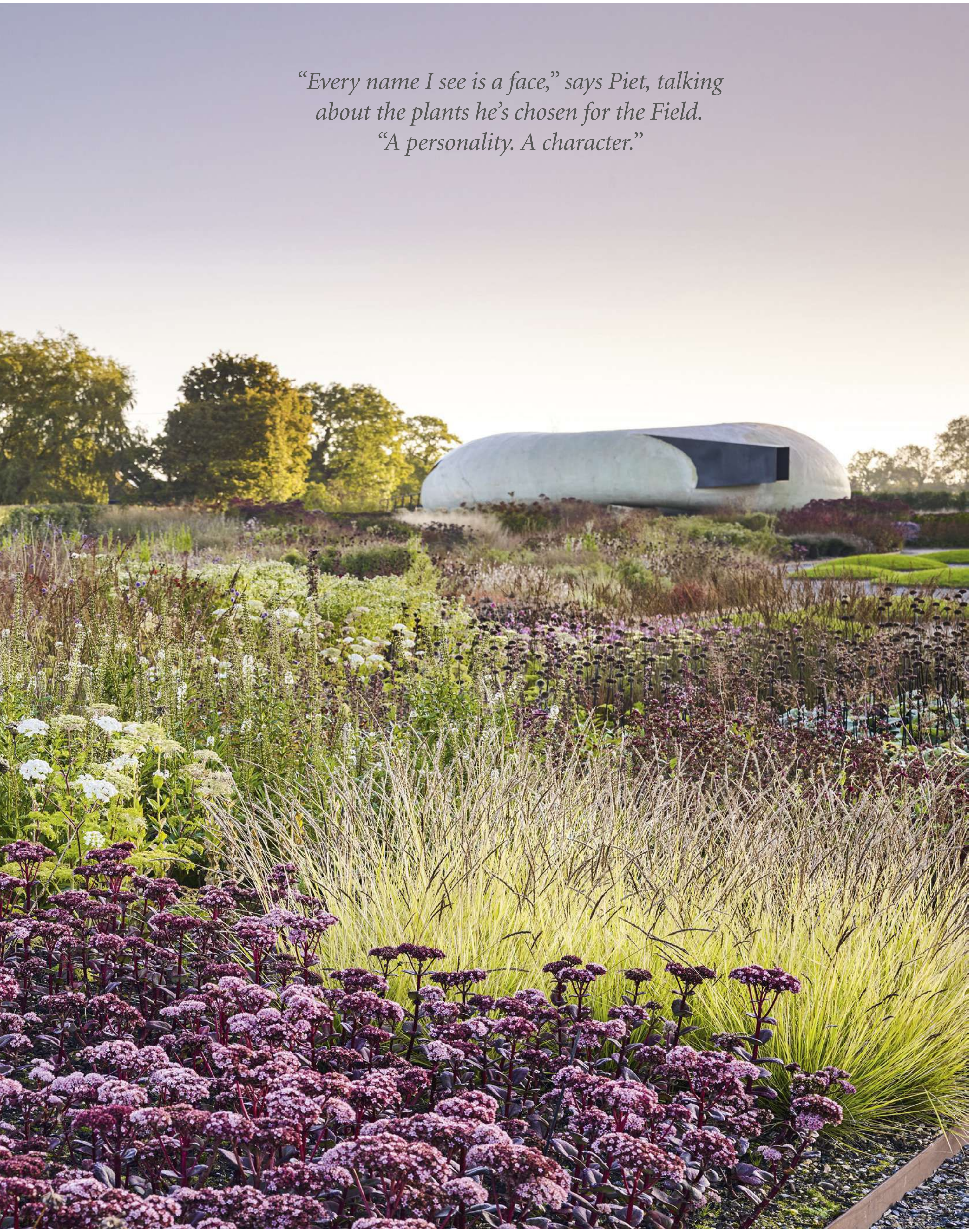
"Every name I see is a face," says Piet, talking about the plants he's chosen for the Field. "A personality. A character. When you get older, you see the quality of plants more easily." Quality for Piet often means a plant's beauty in decay, which has become a distinguishing feature of his style. Seedheads of echinacea and echinops, rudbeckia and sanguisorba add dark silhouettes to the borders through the winter until they are picked to pieces by the weather.

It is not easy, as Piet points out, to make something informal in a geometric context. The rectangle of the original field is bounded and strongly defined on three sides by native hedges. The bottom end is enclosed by the gallery building and cloister where, at the entrance, the view ahead is framed either side by clusters of the Kentucky coffee tree *Gymnocladus dioica*.

Piet's solution has been to hold the fluid, interlocking centre of the overall design within four corner beds and two long, thin side beds that run parallel with the boundaries. These are planted with taller plants, such as purple *Eupatorium maculatum* Atropurpureum Group, *Datisca cannabina* with its drooping greenish racemes and *Actaea simplex* 'Prichard's Giant', which will grow up to three metres tall when established.

As head gardener Mark Dumbleton points out, Piet chooses tough plants, which is just as well because growing conditions here are not easy. Two thousand tons of topsoil were brought in for the planting ▷

Central beds seem to merge in a single mass of plants: with dark-purple *Sedum* 'Matrona' and the creamy, flat-topped umbels of *Selinum wallichianum*. At the top of the garden is Smiljan Radić's squat fibreglass pavilion.



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▷ beds, intentionally low in fertility but structurally very poor, which has created difficulties. Underneath, the ground is solidly compacted clay and plants struggle to punch their roots through it. In the Oudolf Field, 26,000 plants have to be kept alive and in balance with each other. Piet is the first to acknowledge that, to endure, his style depends on a good gardener. In Mark, fortunately, he has one. □

USEFUL INFORMATION

Hauser & Wirth Somerset, Durslade Farm, Bruton, Somerset BA10 0NL.
Tel 01749 814060.
Website hauserwirthsomerset.com
Open Tuesday-Sunday, 10am-5pm, March-October; 10am-4pm, November-February. Admission free.

24
key plants from the Oudolf Field

1 *Helenium* 'Moerheim Beauty'
A key plant for the late-summer border, with strongly reflexed petals of a rich reddish-brown. 95cm-1.2m. AGM*. RHS H7, USDA 4a-8b†.

2 *Helenium* 'Loysder Wieck'
Its scrolled petals stand out in an arresting combination of pink and pale yellow. 90cm-1.2m.

3 *Sanguisorba* 'Blackthorn'
Its soft, flowering spikes are most beautiful when backlit, as here. 1m.

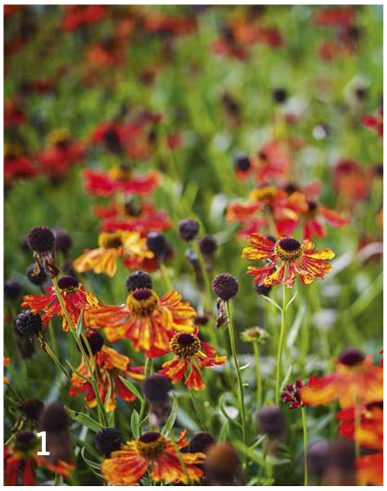
4 *Doellingeria umbellata*
Previously known as *Aster umbellatus*, this is tall perennial with delicate white flowers. 1.3m. USDA 3a-8b.

5 *Symphyotrichum novi-belgii* 'Violetta'
One of the most brilliant of the autumn-flowering asters. 1.2m. USDA 4a-8b.

6 *Sanguisorba officinalis* 'Red Buttons'
Adds rich claret tones to an autumn border. 60cm. USDA 4a-8b.

7 *Molinia caerulea* subsp. *arundinacea* 'Transparent'
A slender and well-named grass. 1.8m. USDA 5a-8b.

8 *Succisa pratensis*
The rounded pompom flowers of the devil's bit scabious are a magnet for insects. 15-60cm. RHS H7, USDA 5a-9b.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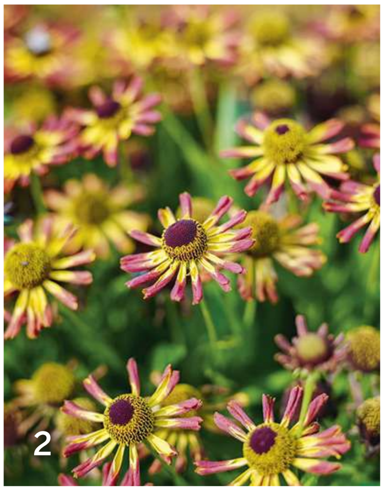
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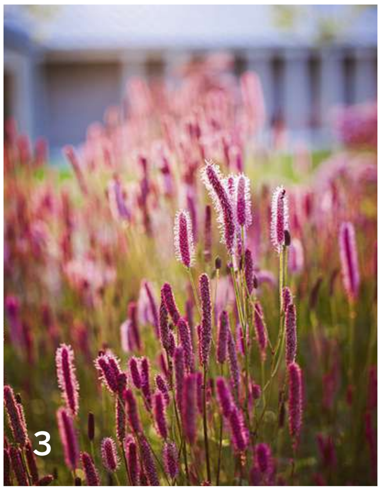
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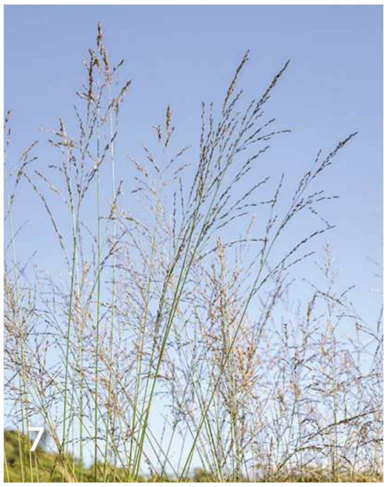
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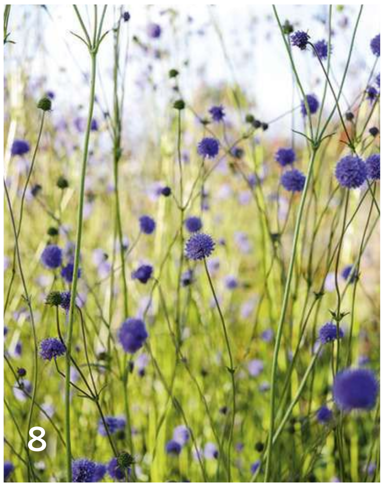
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*HOLDS AN AWARD OF GARDEN MERIT FROM THE ROYAL HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY. †HARDINESS RATINGS GIVEN WHERE AVAILABLE.

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9 *Anemone* x *hybrida* 'Robustissima'
Lives up to its name, with strong stems of pale flowers, washed with a darker pink. 80-1.2m. RHS H7, USDA 3a-8b.

10 *Lysimachia ephemerum*
The airy, white flower spikes of willow-leaved loosestrife rise from mounds of greyish foliage. 1.2m. AGM. RHS H6, USDA 6a-8b.

11 *Stipa tenuissima*
The white Mexican feather grass provides a hazy background for the dark, prickly seedhead of *Echinacea pallida*. 90cm. RHS H6, USDA 4a-10b.

12 *Sporobolus heterolepis*
The prairie dropseed, a North American native, has drooping heads that catch the dew. 45cm. USDA 3a-9b.

13 *Thalictrum rochebruneanum*
A tall meadow rue, seen here flowering in front of a cloud of the fine grass *Deschampsia cespitosa* 'Goldtau'. 1.5m. RHS H6, USDA 4a-10b.

14 *Selinum wallichianum*
One of the finest umbellifers for mixed planting, growing here with *Penstemon digitalis* 'Husker Red'. 1.2m. AGM. RHS H7, USDA 6b-10b.

15 *Agastache* 'Blackadder'
The long-lived spikes will attract masses of bees around their blue flowers. 80cm-1.5m. RHS H4, USDA 5a-9b.

16 *Sedum* 'Matrona'
Pays its rent twice: once with its fleshy, dark-purple foliage and again with its heads of pink flowers. 90cm. AGM. RHS H7, USDA 4a-8b.

17 *Rudbeckia subtomentosa*
This sweet coneflower is a native of the central and eastern prairies of North America. 1.2m. USDA 4a-10b.

18 *Anemone hupehensis* var. *japonica* 'Pamina'
A candy-coloured, double-flowered anemone that packs a real colour punch. 75cm. AGM. RHS H7, USDA 5a-8b.

19 *Echinops bannaticus*
The spent seedheads of *Allium atropurpureum* mingle with the spiny balls of the blue globe thistle. 1.5m. RHS H7, USDA 3a-10b.

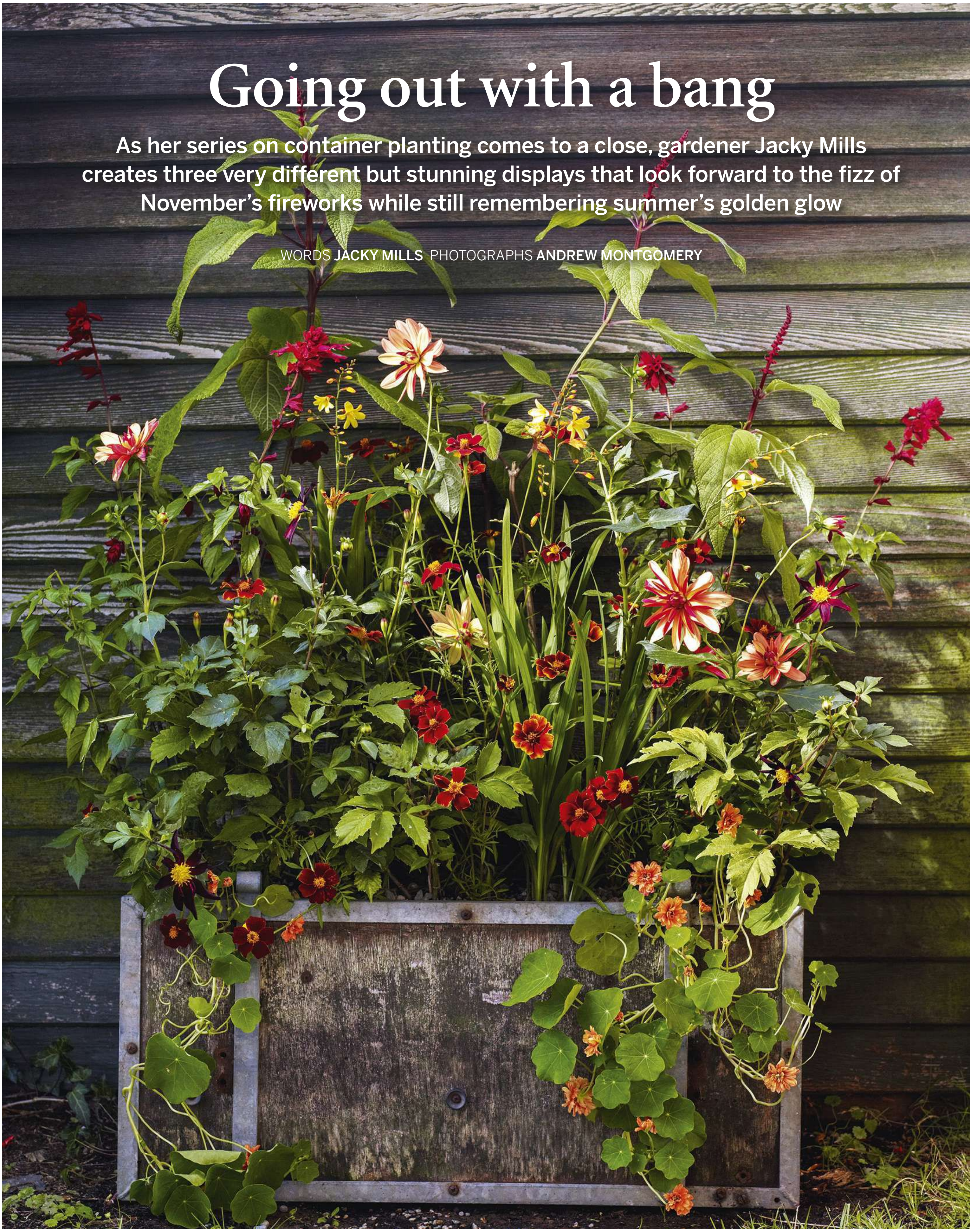
20 *Veronicastrum virginicum* 'Album'
Its white flower spikes look good through late summer and into autumn. 1.2m. AGM. USDA 4a-9b.

21 *Eurybia* x *herveyi*
Previously known as *Aster macrophyllus* 'Twilight', this creates a haze of pale mauve in the border. 90cm. USDA 3a-8a.

22 *Aruncus* 'Horatio'
The feathery flower spikes of the goat's beard rise above foliage that turns red in autumn. 1m. RHS H7, USDA 4a-7b.

23 *Imperata cylindrica* 'Rubra'
In late summer, the appropriately named Japanese blood grass brings a fiery blast of colour to a border. 40cm. RHS H3, USDA 5a-9b.

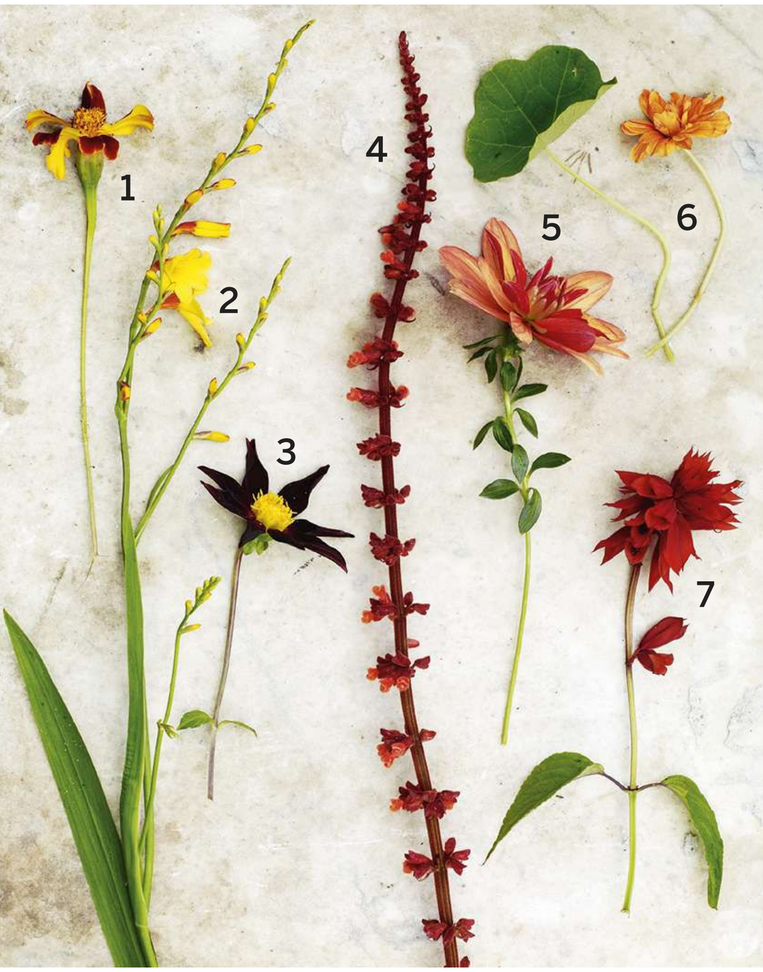
24 *Echinacea pallida*
Stripped of their summer colour, the dry petals stream out like mermaids' hair. 90cm. RHS H6, USDA 4a-10b.



Going out with a bang

As her series on container planting comes to a close, gardener Jacky Mills creates three very different but stunning displays that look forward to the fizz of November's fireworks while still remembering summer's golden glow

WORDS **JACKY MILLS** PHOTOGRAPHS **ANDREW MONTGOMERY**



Autumn extravanganza

Autumn is the time of reds and oranges; rich burnt colours, mingled with pinks and purples… anything goes at this time of year. As the sun lowers in the sky, the changing light levels intensify the colours even more. This display will get bigger and better as the season progresses – culminating in a crescendo of fireworks – until cut down by the first frosts. I hope they will inspire you to create a dazzling floral pyrotechnic display of your own.

How to achieve the look

Container

My partner Ian made this container using a discarded tailgate as the frontispiece. The rest was built using offcuts of plywood screwed together. We added drainage holes, covered these with polystyrene chips, and placed it in position in a sunny spot before filling with a loamy compost.

Cultivation and care

Salvias are extremely versatile species coming in a wide variety of forms and colours. *S. confertiflora* gets very tall, and is best grown each year from cuttings, which are great for container planting as they will flower within a season. The dark-purple stems of both salvias pick up on the moody, almost black petals of *Dahlia* 'Verrone's Obsidian'. The orange petals of *D.* 'Jescot Julie' are backed in red, giving a stripey effect – a combination repeated on the trumpets of *Crocosmia* 'Harlequin'. Its lance-like foliage contrasts well with the ferny leaves of *Tagetes* 'Burning Embers'. This annual is great for borders and pots alike, with a long flowering season and I've previously teamed it with the tangerine dahlias 'Nicholas' and 'Autumn Fairy'. Collect seed each year to develop your own strain and sow indoors, February to March. The double-flowered apricot nasturtium will clamber through everything but is sterile, so take cuttings in late summer. A weekly high-potash feed will encourage flowering, but watch out for earwigs on the dahlias.

Plants (see above left)

1 *Tagetes* 'Burning Embers'
A tall, half-hardy annual with single, deep-red and orange flowers. 40-70cm. June – October.

2 *Crocosmia* 'Harlequin'
A striking cultivar with multi-tonal flowers. 50-60cm. August – October.

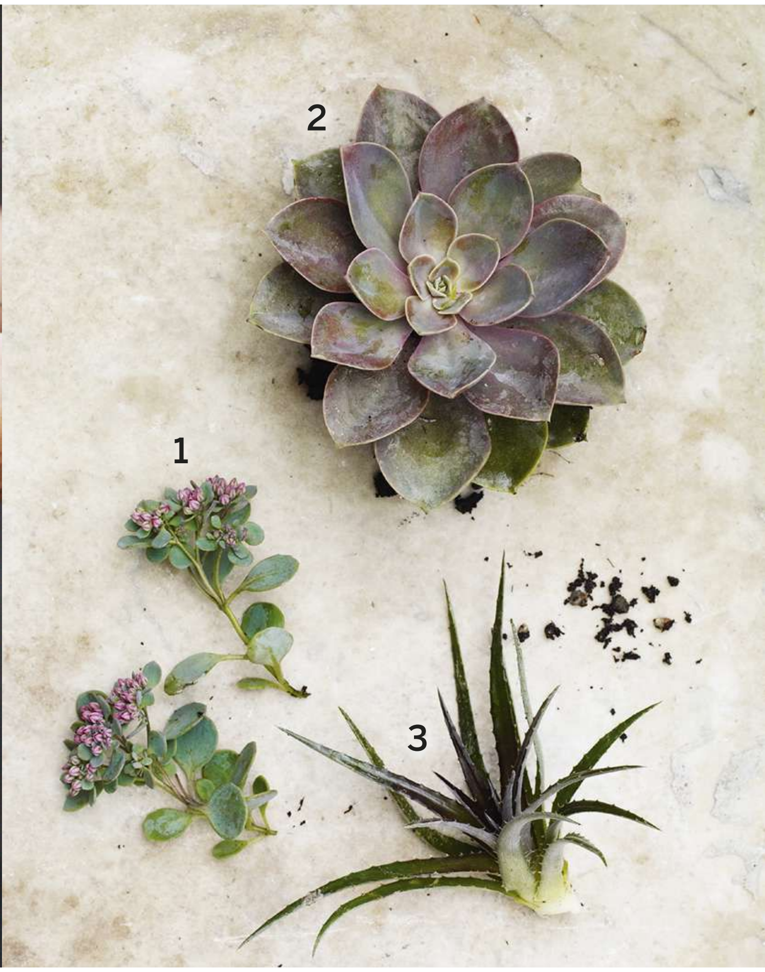
3 *Dahlia* 'Verrone's Obsidian'
A single orchid type with contrasting yellow anthers. 60cm. July – October.

4 *Salvia confertiflora*
A tender shrub that takes easily from cuttings. 1.5m. August – November.

5 *Dahlia* 'Jescot Julie'
A double orchid dahlia. Lift after first frosts. 75cm-1m. July – October.

6 *Tropaeolum majus* 'Hermine Grashoff'
Double, orange flowers. Treat as an annual and propagate from cuttings. 30cm. June – October.

7 *Salvia splendens* 'Jimi's Good Red'
A tender perennial with bright-red calyces. 1m. August – November.



Magic carpets

I started using succulents a lot more after seeing the elaborate carpet bedding displays on the Parterre at Waddesdon Manor in Buckinghamshire. They have also been used creatively at the top of the circular steps that lead down into the meadow at Great Dixter. They are easy to grow and make great centrepieces. The combinations are endless, so experiment with a range of plants in different shapes and colours and have fun creating your own living tapestry.

How to achieve the look

Container

The squat, cast iron urn (above) is very heavy and has a lovely rusty patina enhanced by the stiff, silvery-green and bronze leaves of the bromeliad. Chosen for its architecture as much as its colour, the urn has deep fluting on the top rim that was too special to hide with a trailing plant. The floristry urn (facing page) has a wider bowl and is more suitable for displaying lower-growing species.

Cultivation and care

These succulents love sun and well-drained conditions. Use gravel at the base of each urn and add plenty of grit and sharp sand to the compost. Top dress with more gravel. The genus *Echeveria*, named after the Mexican botanical artist Atanasio Echeverría y Godoy, has the appearance of a sophisticated house leek. The beautiful soft-pink rosettes of the hybrid *Echeveria* 'Perle von Nürnberg' are ideal for growing in containers and produce delicate coral and yellow flower spikes. Although tender, they can withstand some cold if their roots are dry. Propagate from leaf cuttings and offsets. *Sedum cauticola* 'Coca-Cola' has round, glaucous leaves and deep-pink flowers in autumn. The spiny rosettes of the *Dyckia* produce offsets called 'pups' that can grow into large clusters. They require well-drained, gritty but humus-rich compost. Water from spring to autumn with monthly feeds of a half-strength cacti fertiliser. Allow to dry out slightly in winter.

Plants (see above)

1 *Sedum cauticola* 'Coca-Cola'
A mat-forming stonecrop with glaucous leaves and pink, star-shaped flowers. 20cm. September – October.

2 *Echeveria* 'Perle von Nürnberg'
A tender succulent producing rosettes of fleshy, purplish-grey leaves. 15-40cm. AGM*.

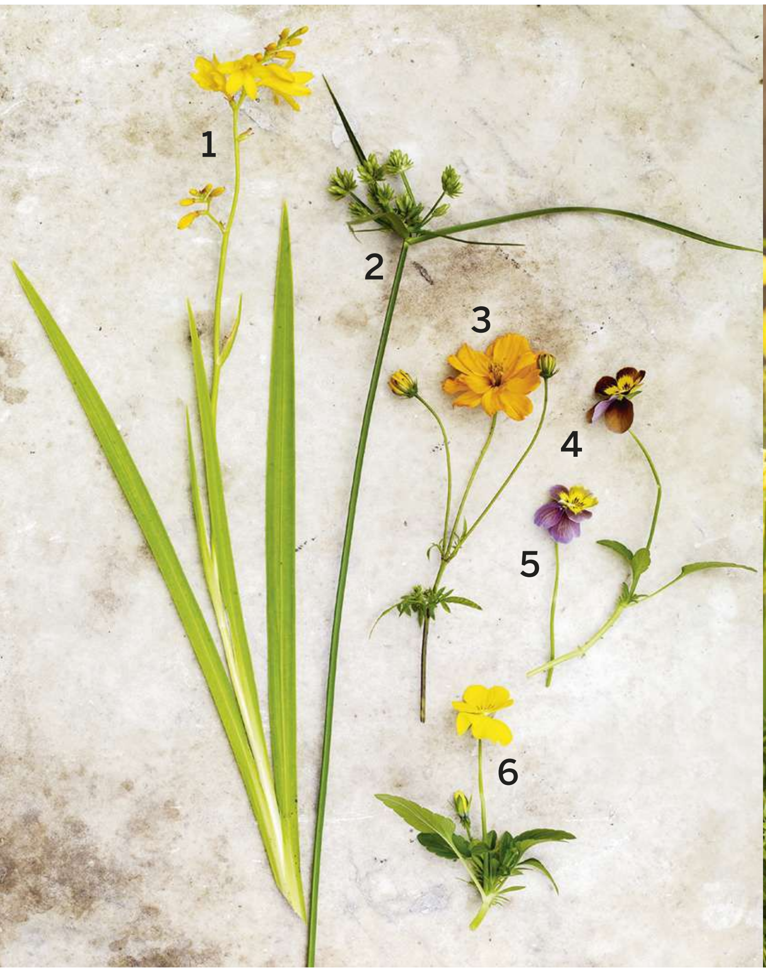
3 *Dyckia leptostachya*
A spiny-leaved bromeliad producing tall flower spikes in early summer. 15-65cm. May – August.

Recommended suppliers

- **Cotswold Garden Flowers**
  Tel 01386 422829, cgf.net
- **Dyson's Nurseries**
  Tel 01732 885094, dysonsalvias.com
- **Rose Cottage Plants**
  Tel 01992 573775, rosecottageplants.co.uk

For a full list of suppliers please visit gardensillustrated.com

*HOLDS AN AWARD OF GARDEN MERIT FROM THE ROYAL HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY.



Bring me sunshine

Yellow lifts the spirits. Think of daffodils, sunflowers and the buttery hues of autumn leaves – it makes you smile. I've used it here with the sword-like leaves of a crocosmia combined with the architectural umbrella sedge. The linear composition is softened with the warm tones of the cosmos and tumbling violas at the base. Using a splash of purple – opposite to yellow on the colour wheel – in the violas adds some contrast and makes the whole scheme more vibrant.

How to achieve the look

Container

I like the retro feel of this 1930s' cream and green enamel bowl. The colour is more sympathetic to yellow than the classic blue and white enamelware, and the handles make it very portable. I drilled holes through the base to aid drainage, adding a layer of gravel followed by a free-draining compost.

Cultivation and care

The annual *Cosmos sulphureus* 'Bunte Lichter' is a useful mix of single and double flowers in a range of yellows and oranges. Sow in modules in the spring and plant out in May, keeping a few in pots to use in containers. Pinching the tips out will increase flowering and stop them becoming too tall.

Crocosmias can be bought as corms in the autumn when there is a greater choice of cultivars, or in full flower from garden centres in the summer. The bright-yellow flowers of *Crocosmia* x *crocosmiiflora* 'Coleton Fishacre' are followed by architectural seedheads too. Their horizontal nature sits well with the flat heads of the clump-forming *Cyperus*, topped with clusters of pale-green flowers. A mix of three different-coloured bedding violas creates a dancing effect as they merge together towards the base. If you regularly deadhead them you'll be rewarded with a continuous display over summer. The airy, yellow flowers of *Bidens aurea* would also work well having similar fern-like foliage to the *Cosmos* or try a *Coreopsis* cultivar.

Plants (see above)

1 *Crocosmia* x *crocosmiiflora* 'Coleton Fishacre'
An upright, hardy perennial with sprays of yellow flowers. 75cm. July – September.

2 *Cyperus vegetus*
This hardy rhizomatous sedge has green bracts surrounding inflorescent clusters. 50cm. July – September.

3 *Cosmos sulphureus* 'Bunte Lichter'
A half-hardy annual with single and double flowers in a mix of orange shades. 60-90cm. June – October.

4 *Viola* x *wittrockiana* 'Deltini Honey Bee'

5 *Viola* x *wittrockiana* 'Delta Yellow With Purple Wing'

6 *Viola cornuta* 'Deltini Yellow'
Three violas that provide a long period of colour and combine well with the other plants in the mix. These compact bedding plants come in a wide range of colours. 15-20cm. May – October.

The garden of an old yeoman's house in the Wye Valley once boasted, according to its owner and garden designer Sean Swallow, a box parterre with a wishing well, a splayed hornbeam avenue ("all wrongly spaced," adds landscape architect Max Askew), "a curly whirly thing with a wagon wheel in the middle" and a hobbit-like path. Five years later, it has transformed into a collection of calm, open garden rooms where soft, sometimes wild, vertical planting juxtaposes nicely with the horizontal lines of sculpted grass terraces and geometric stone walls.

The garden also has two ponds (formal and natural), a walled garden, a courtyard, a ha-ha, and a new (intentionally) irregularly spaced hornbeam walk – all elements of the traditional country garden to which Sean and Max have given a subtle contemporary spin.

A London bookseller who knew nothing about gardens, Sean thought he had better start learning when he moved to the country with his partner in 2011. He trifled with a day course at Inchbald School of Design in London but ended up teaching himself by reading voraciously instead.

By the time he reached Scatterford in the Wye Valley, Sean knew a great deal about planting schemes but was less confident when it came to landscaping and levels. Something had to be done, as the house sat uneasily on the side of a slope with land rising steeply at the back and falling away rapidly at the front, and happily he met landscape architect Max Askew through the estate agent who sold them the property. Max had the expertise and nerve Sean lacked so Sean handed him a blank canvas. The garden, they agreed, should accentuate and frame the landscape, with walls, terraces and planting complementing while also challenging the sloping hills of the countryside beyond.

What evolved was a series of rooms, each telling a different story. An open lawn dominated by a pool, carefully positioned to reflect the silhouette of an ancient apple tree, leads to other parts of the garden. The hornbeam walk has grown shoulders and finally met in the middle, much to Max's delight. At its entrance stand two thuggish blocks of plants – *Angelica edulis*, its purple stalks flicking up like trapeze artists, and the deep-bronze *Actaea simplex* Atropurpurea Group 'Brunette'. "I like to think of this as a nightclub, with these two plants the bouncers," says Sean. "A long, walled walk is given over to more unfettered and ebullient plantings of actaea, artemisia, molinia, lobelia and crocosmia, which provide Mondrian-style blocks of colour.

Deep, sloping borders of plants looking down like spectators in a concert hall provide the framework for a perfect square room, a lawn and an incongruously placed mounting block ("It was already here and I love it," says Sean). Chunks of vivid-yellow rudbekia stand proud from a froth of white willow herb, backlit in the evening light. Behind the house rise a series of grass terraces. Northeast facing, they throw ▷

Main image Bordered by the hornbeam walk, the round pond is carefully sited in the centre of the lawn to reflect the ancient apple tree. In the foreground pink spires of *Persicaria amplexicaulis* Orange Field (= 'Orangofield') add colour.

Opposite, left to right

The base of an old cider press, planted with common thyme 'Silver Posie', dominates the courtyard which features a selection of Mediterranean planting.

In the walled garden, *Euphorbia seguieriana* subsp. *niciciana* sprawls on to steps, while *Leptinella squalida* provides ground cover among the paving stones.

The old cow pond with *Lythrum virgatum* 'Dropmore Purple' and swamp milkweed *Asclepias incarnata*, which grow well in the marshy conditions.

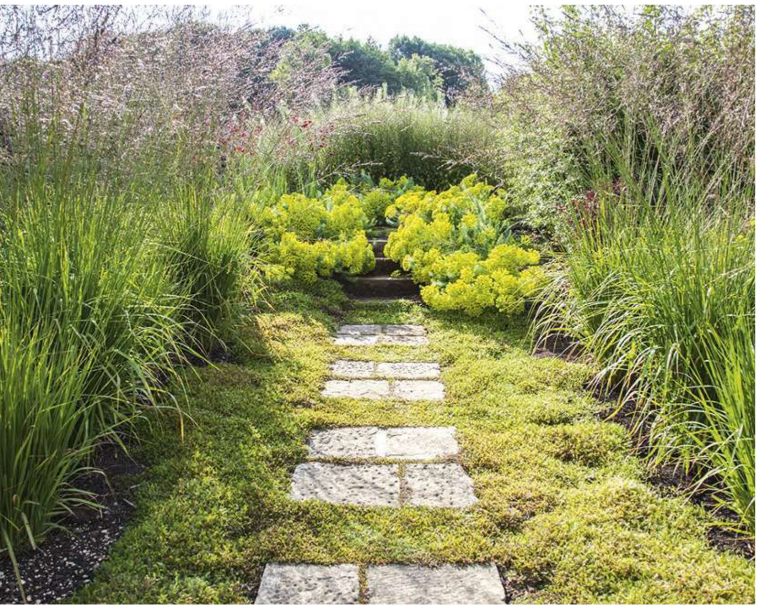
In brief

Name Scatterford.
What A clever contemporary take on a traditional country garden.
Where Wye Valley, Gloucestershire.
Size Two acres.
Soil Workable clay with added topsoil.
Climate Warm and wet. Frost tumbles away down the hill and never lingers.
Hardiness rating USDA 8.

History reflected

Self-taught garden designer Sean Swallow has taken a historic garden in Gloucestershire and used its past to create something sleek and modern

WORDS **CAMILLA SWIFT** PHOTOGRAPHS **FIONA McLEOD**



▷ spectacular shadows. They are particularly restful and, according to Sean, encourage much lying about despite the idiosyncratic presence, on the middle terrace, of a croquet lawn.

Finally, the double doors of an ancient barn open out on to the newly restored old cow pond with bullrushes, primulas, lobelia, lythrum and *Asclepias incarnata*, which, says Sean, has "the most amazing and beautiful seedhead of any perennial".

He uses native species wherever possible; he doesn't deadhead or stake and chooses robust plants. For additional inspiration, he will drive around for hours, peering over other people's walls at giant astilbe and colossal peonies, but you'll be hard pressed to find traditional cottage garden flowers here. Against a formal framework of built landscape, Sean has set an opulence of carefully considered, original and unusual planting. Staples include artemisia, lobelia, persicaria and the delicate white-flowered *Patrinia villosa*. "It wanders in a beautiful way," says Sean. "You don't see it planted very often." Then there's the bell-shaped *Gladiolus* 'Ruby', a *G. papilio* hybrid, and varying forms of molinia. "This is definitely a molinia not a miscanthus garden," says Sean. And there ▷

Main image The double doors of a listed barn open out on to the grass terraces behind the house. The wide middle terrace was built to allow for a croquet lawn.

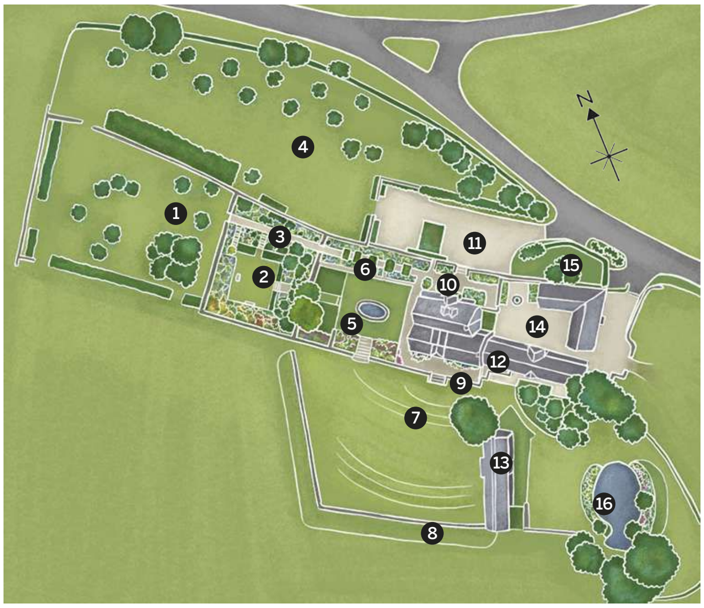
Below, left to right
At the front of the house bold, irregular chunks of box set off pots filled with *Astilbe rivularis* var. *myriantha* and *Phlox* '21st Century White'.

Bright-red *Crocosmia* 'Hellfire' mixes with the tall, white plumes of *Artemisia lactiflora* 'Elfenbein', purple-headed *Angelica gigas* and acid-green *Euphorbia schillingii* alongside a path known as the Long Walk.

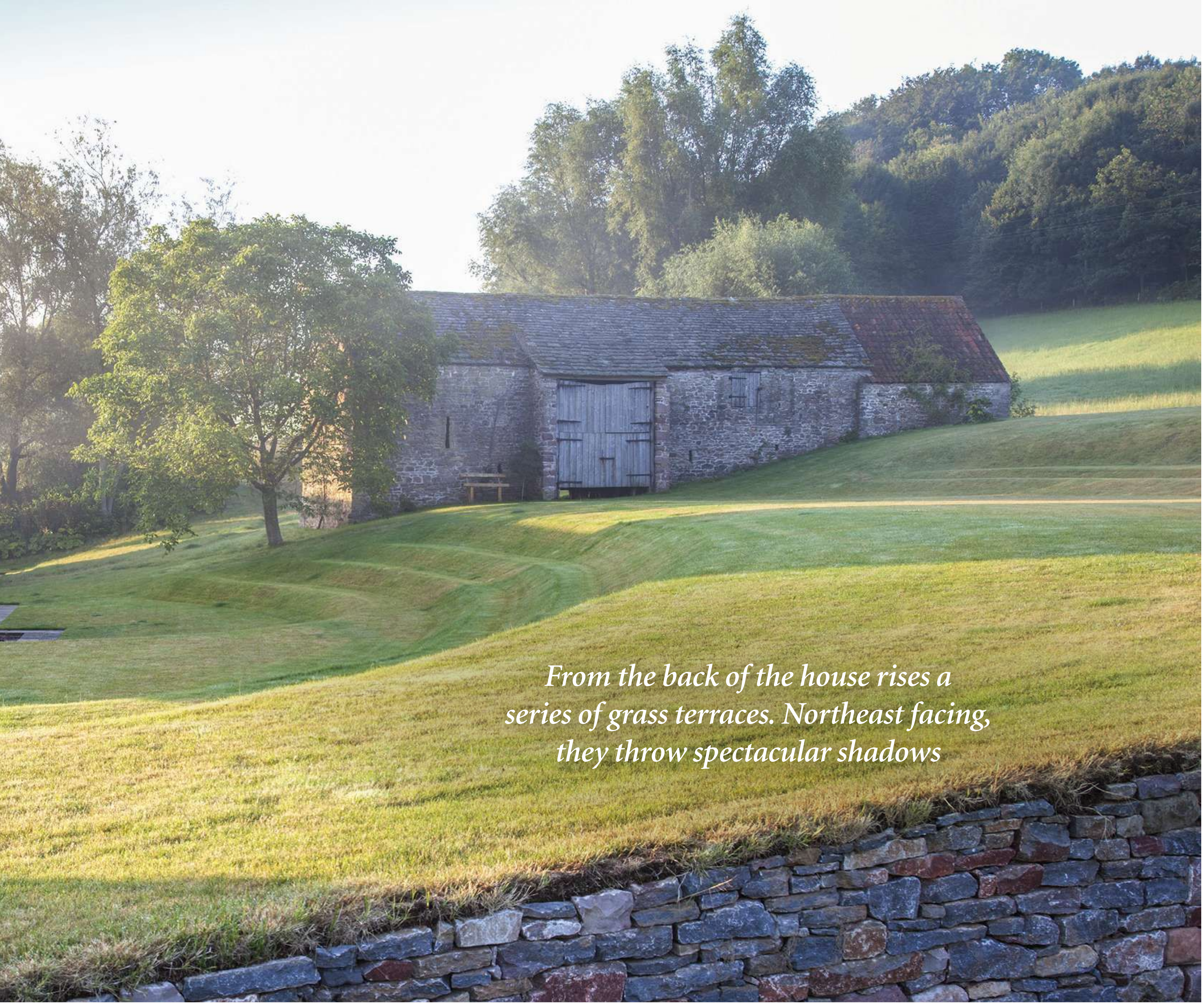
The reflected warmth from the stone wall in this courtyard garden makes it the perfect place to sit in summer.

GARDEN PLAN

1 Field earthwork
2 Walled Garden
3 Long Walk
4 Fruit orchard
5 Old apple tree
6 Hornbeam Walk
7 Earthwork terraces
8 Ha-ha
9 Broad terrace
10 Parterre and cider press garden
11 Drive
12 House
13 Barn
14 Courtyard with cider press base
15 Birch tree copse
16 Cow pond



HANNAH McVICAR



From the back of the house rises a series of grass terraces. Northeast facing, they throw spectacular shadows

▷ are interesting rarities: *Heptacodium miconioides*, *Pycnanthemum muticum* (mountain mint) and *Boehmeria nivea* (cotton nettle).

This garden, like its owner, appears to be simultaneously busy and laid-back but is that true of either? For all the apparently free-fall planting, the garden is immaculate and clearly needs serious maintainance from the redoubtable team of gardeners Kelly Weare and Rhys Williams. And Sean? "I used to walk around making vast lists. Now the lists are smaller and I'm more relaxed. I was a real pain about planting the walled garden, though. I kept changing my mind – one minute I was Christopher Lloyd, the next I was Beth Chatto." Rites of passage Sean, rites of passage. □

USEFUL INFORMATION

Address Scatterford, Newland, Coleford, Gloucestershire GL16 8NG.
Tel Kelly Weare on 01291 675483.
Website seanswallow.com
Open By arrangement uner the NGS. Admission £5, children free.
Contact Landscape architect Max Askew, tel 01993 831442, askewnelson.com

Rural appeal

To settle the new garden into the landscape Sean and Max were determined to reflect, reuse and recreate materials already present

Mounting block

A block of stone once used for a rider to mount a horse – a leftover from the original garden – seemed to fit where it was: planted randomly in the lawn and making no sense. This is Sean's favourite part of the garden – he can spend hours gazing at it and the landscape beyond.

Existing stone walls

The stone walls had collapsed or had virtually disappeared and it took two dry stone wallers two years to fully restore. In keeping with the area, additional stone was sourced locally and walls built without capstones.

Rusty iron gate

Sean found a gate in the original garden. "We reinterpreted the design and made it our own," he says. The resulting strong and simple lines were achieved by Thomas Forge in Fownhope, Hereford (Tel 01432 860262).

Ancient apple tree

One of the few original natural features remaining from the old garden and the starting point for Sean and Max's design. "It was really lovely making a garden around a tree such as this," says Sean. The formal pond was carefully placed to reflect the tree's silhouette.

Top of a cider press

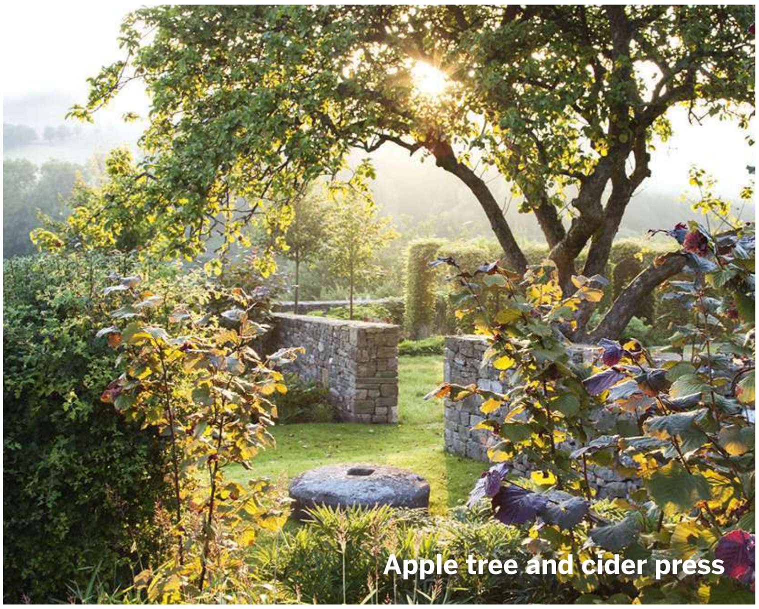
This mighty stone doughnut takes two strong men and a large digger to move, which Sean has done several times. He thinks he has finally found its rightful spot. Much relief all round.

Pots

Sean is constantly moving and replanting a collection of pots from the Hode Pottery (**hodepottery.co.uk**). Made from stoneware clay, they have an unusual silver-grey colour wash and are exceptionally strong yet light to move around. They are impervious to frost and can be left out all winter.

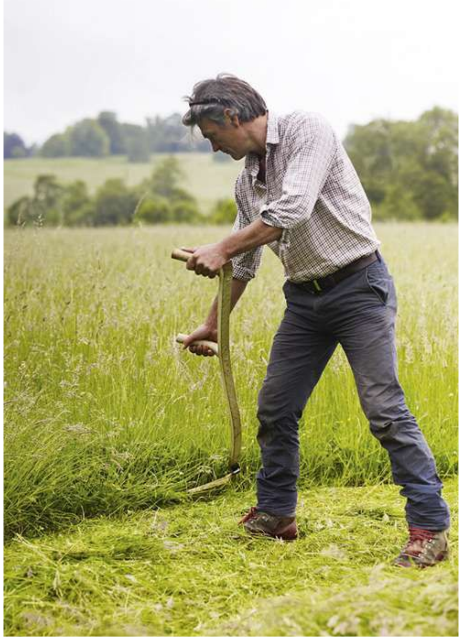
Mounting block

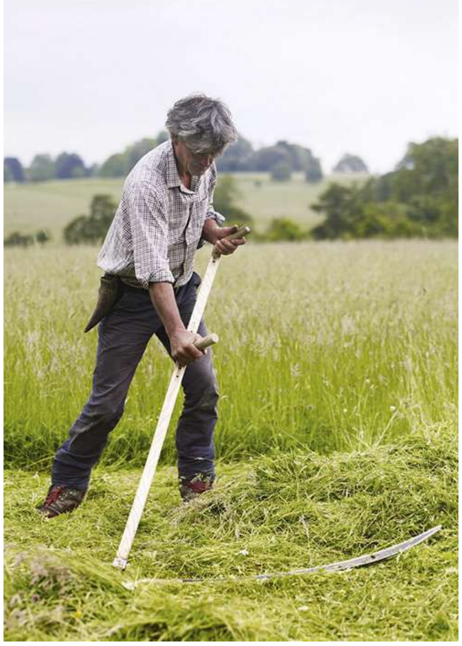
Existing stone walls and a rusty iron gate



Apple tree and cider press

Pots





Reaping the benefits

Captain Poldark's rippling muscles may have sparked a nation's interest in the scythe, but this ancient tool has long been gaining popularity with gardeners. Champion mower Simon Damant shows how to wield one safely

WORDS JODIE JONES PHOTOGRAPHS ANDREW MONTGOMERY

The air is filled with birdsong and the buzz of insects as Simon Damant mows the meadows on the Wimpole Estate where he works as a forester. The scythe in his hands makes barely a whisper as it slices effortlessly through a stand of grass and wildflowers in a wide arc. The tool he is using might look primitive but, Simon passionately believes, it has yet to be bettered, whether you are cutting small garden meadows or the paths in your allotment. "The modern alternative is a strimmer, which guzzles fossil fuel, makes a racket and can injure wildlife. It doesn't even do a particularly good job," he says. "I can cut a meadow faster and neater with my scythe than anyone with a strimmer." Nor is this an idle boast. Simon is a regular champion at national scything competitions and has made good on this claim (in strictly adjudicated conditions) on many occasions.

Even so, by the Second World War many in the UK had largely abandoned this traditional low-cost, low-impact tool in favour of motorised lawn mowers and combine harvesters. Only the Grim Reaper and a niche group of environmental enthusiasts kept hold of their scythes. And then *Poldark* hit our screens. The scene in which actor Aidan Turner stripped off his shirt for a spot of sweaty mowing was voted the best TV moment of 2015 by *Radio Times* readers and suddenly everyone was interested again.

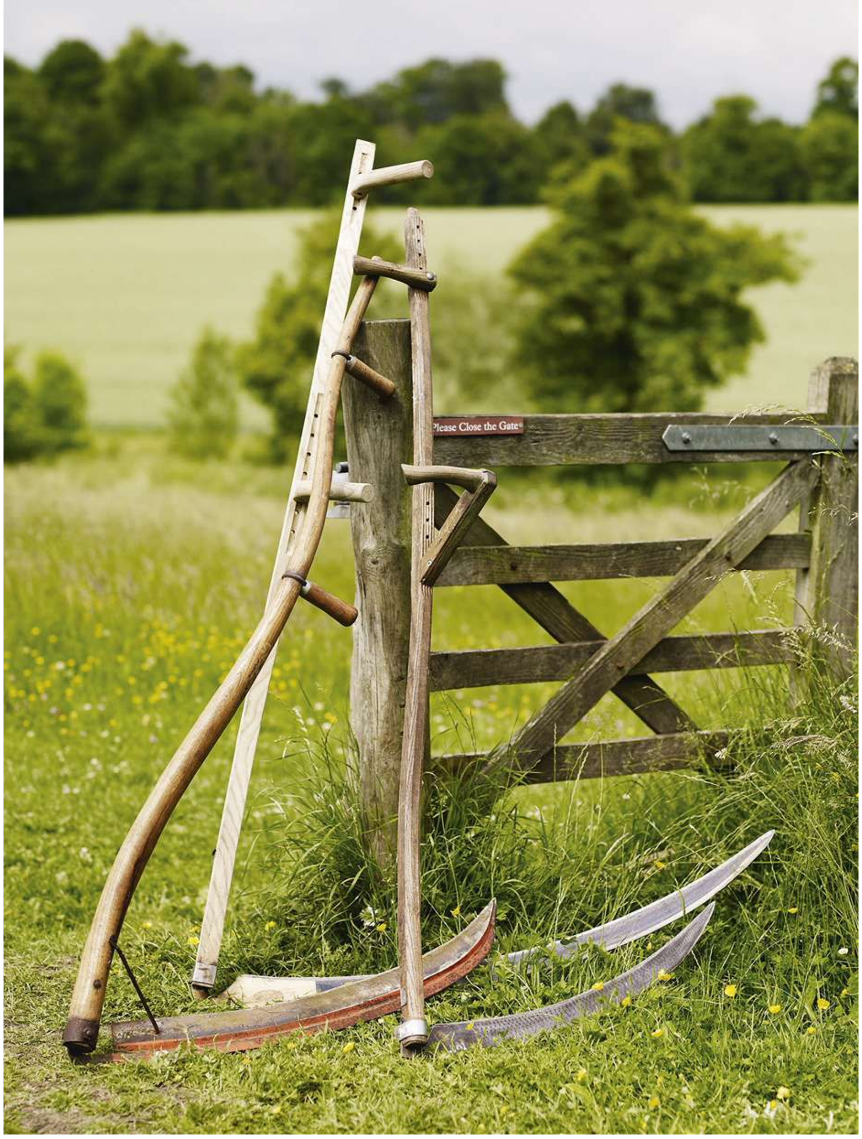
"Actually, going topless is one of the real dangers of scything," says Simon, with his tongue slightly in his cheek. "You've got to be careful to slap on the sunscreen." Given that a scythe is essentially a razor-sharp blade lashed to the end of a long stick, sun burn is not the only health and safety issue but, if used properly, it is neither dangerous nor particularly hard work. "My only objection to that scene in *Poldark* was that he was making it look hard work," says Simon. "You certainly don't need to break a sweat if your technique is correct."

Good technique is key, both for safety and efficiency, which is why Simon encourages beginners to get a bit of hands-on training. "There are lots of courses available. The Scythe Association website [scytheassociation.org] is a good first port of call."

And once you get the hang of it, suddenly mowing can become a pleasure. Instead of battling with temperamental starter cords and smelly engines you discover that, as with all the best gardening jobs, there is real joy to be had from working in tune with nature.

Turn over for tips on technique and the tools you'll need ▷

Anti-clockwise from top left As a skilled mower, Simon uses very little energy to wield his scythe. Rotating from the hips, he slides the blade along the ground from right to left, simultaneously moving his weight from right to left foot. Harnessing the velocity of the snath (handle) allows him to slice cleanly through the grass with minimal effort. To complete the cutting arc, he bends his left knee slightly at the end of the swing, going with the momentum of the action.



Getting started

- **A scythe's blade is razor sharp** and can be highly dangerous if you don't know what you're doing. Simon has provided some basic instructions (right), but recommends novice mowers sign up for a scything course or some sort of hands-on instruction before starting work. You can also find helpful instructions online (**scythesupply.com**) and in ***The Scything Handbook*** (Filbert Press, £14.99), published on 22 September.
- **Scythes have been in use for at least 2,000 years**, although their design has changed slightly over time. Today there are a many models to choose from, often named after the geographical regions where they originated. The Austrian scythe (above, in the foreground) is generally regarded as the best for a beginner. This model has an adjustable curved wooden snath (available in a range of sizes according to the height of the main user) and is not too heavy. It can be fitted with a variety of different blades, depending on the job in hand. (The English scythe is pictured on the left and Danish scythe at the very back.)
- **There are fine grades of blade for cutting grass and fleshy weeds**, and more robust ditch blades for clearing rough grass and coarse weeds. Length of blade is another choice. Beginners, especially if working near tree trunks or fences, may find a shorter blade around 50-60cm is easier to manage. Mowers working on a larger scale favour a longer blade, up to 90cm (although the average is 75cm), for obvious reasons, however, this will also be more prone to damage and harder to wield effectively.
- **If you do have a large meadow to mow** it is worth bearing in mind that the best time of day to mow is just after sunrise. As temperatures rise during the day, a plant's moisture content gradually transpires, making its stem harder to cut.

Setting up and maintenance

1 Each scythe should be uniquely set up to suit the physique and mowing style of its owner. The first step is to fix the lower handle to sit on a level with the hip bone.

2 Next, rest your elbow on the lower handle and extend your arm up the snath (the main upright of the scythe). The top handle should line up with the tips of your fingers.

3 Fit the blade loosely and slighty tighten the D collar (which attaches the blade to the shaft), then adjust the hafting angle. To do this you need to rest the end of the snath on one knee and pinpoint the position of the beard, the blade's rear edge nearest the shaft (marked (A) in image 4), then slowly pivot the scythe on your knee away from your reference point until the tip (B) reaches a point at least 5cm below this reference point.

4 Then fit a wooden wedge to lift the edge of the blade up or down in relation to the ground when cutting. You may need to fine tune the set up if you have problems mowing.

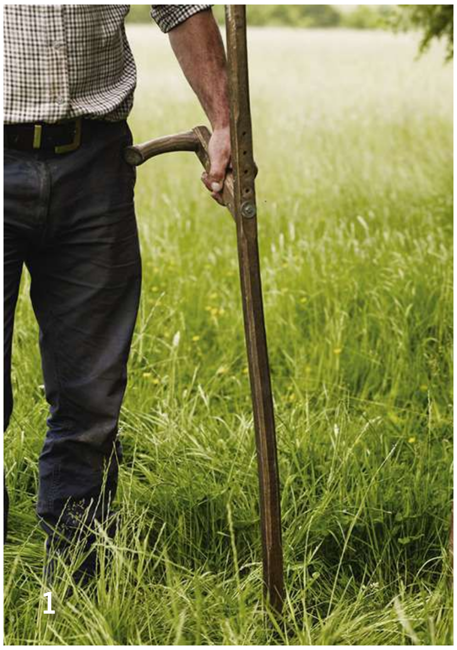
5 The blade must be sharpened after approximately ten metres of mowing. A sharp blade is easier to work with and produces a neater cut. In the field, use a handful of mown grass to roughly wipe the blade clean before you start sharpening.

6 The best tool for sharpening in the field is a traditional whetstone. The whetstone must always be used damp, so a water carrier is an essential piece of kit. Simon uses a cow's horn, but plastic alternatives are available.

7 Support the snath on your left thigh and cradle the back edge of the blade with your left forearm. Using the fingers of your left hand, feed the blade under your left arm from heel to tip, as you sharpen along the cutting edge. Pass the whetstone over the blade on alternating sides in a scissoring action, as you would to sharpen a kitchen knife.

8 Always use a blade cover when storing scythe blades. The razor-sharp edge is extremely dangerous, with the power to sever a tendon. If you are nervous handling the blade, begin by wearing Kevlar gloves.

9 After a day's mowing, the blade will usually need remedial treatment to restore its cutting edge and remove any nicks in the metal. This process, known as peening, involves a special anvil and hammer. Support the blade carefully and work from heel to point, beat the cutting edge against the peening anvil with the hammer to flatten and smooth it out, before sharpening with a whetstone.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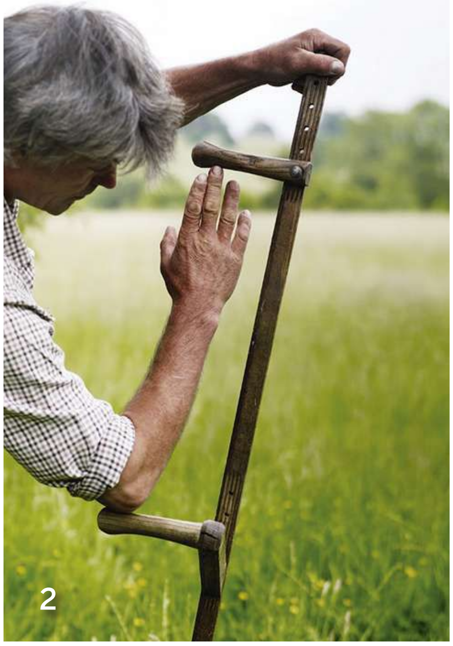
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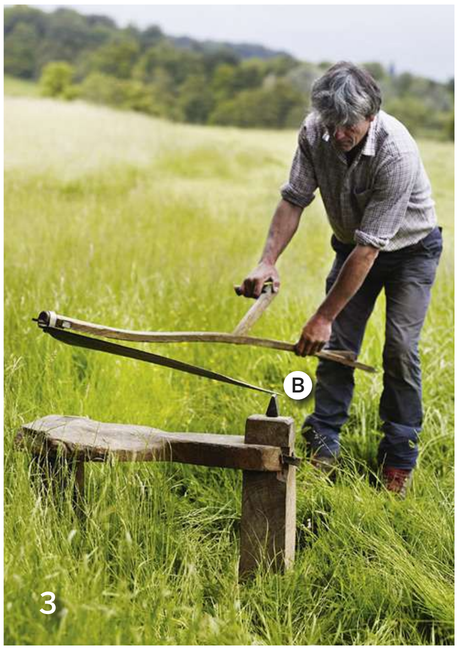

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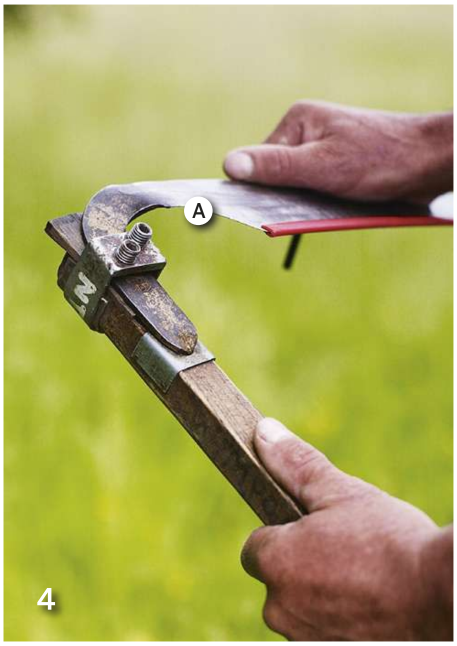

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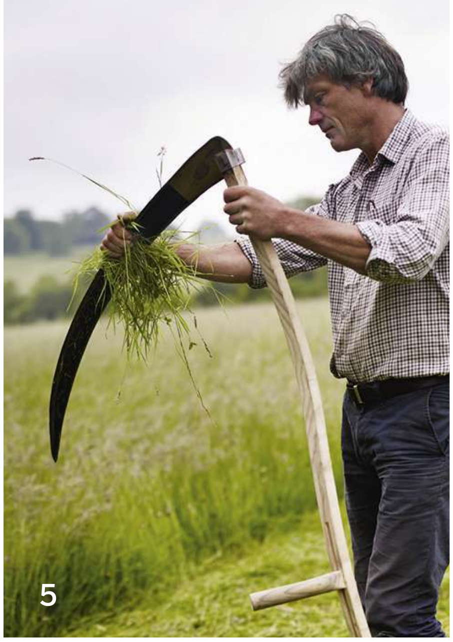
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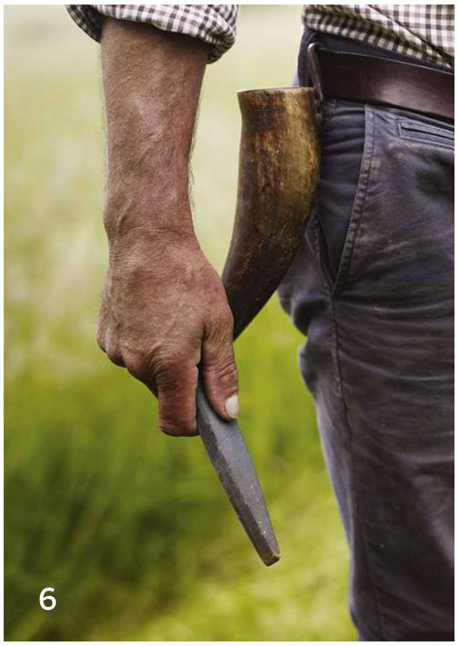
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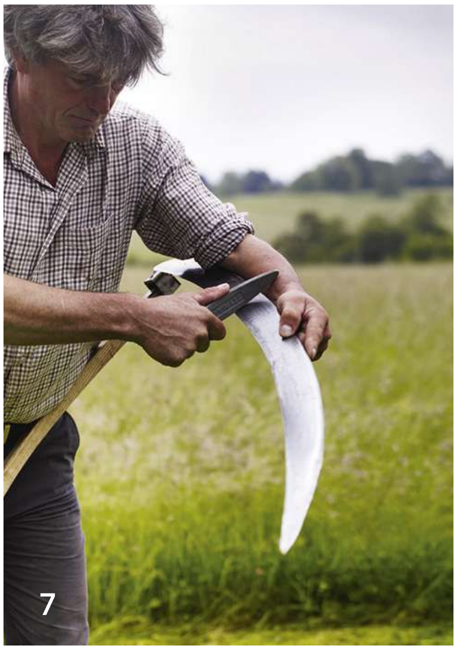
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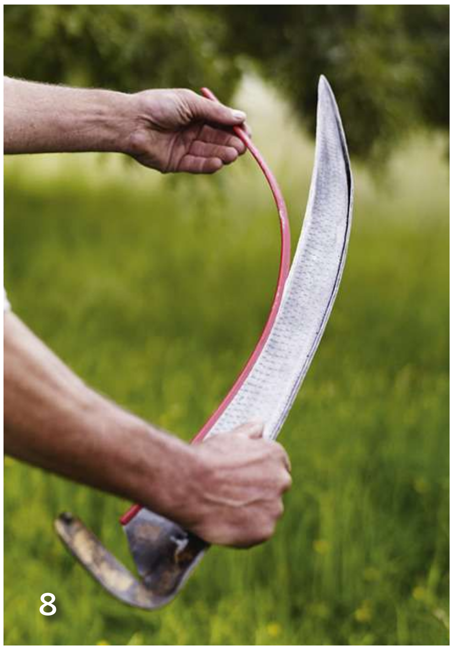
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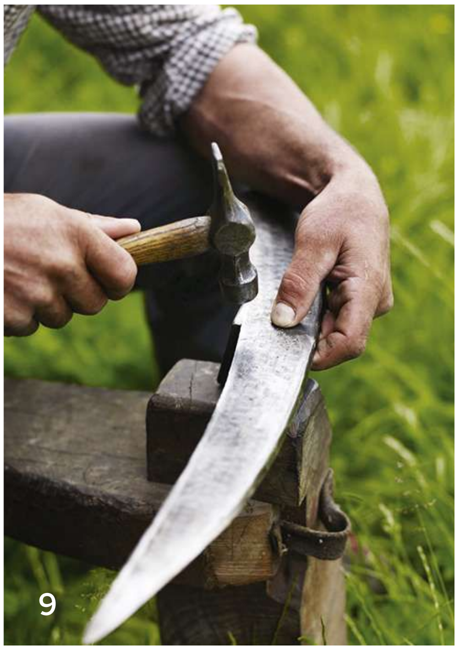
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MANY THANKS TO THE NATIONAL TRUST AND THE WIMPOLE ESTATE IN CAMBRIDGESHIRE WHERE THE IMAGES FOR THIS FEATURE WERE TAKEN.

In brief

What A genus of 420 species of hardy annuals and perennials valued for their adaptability, their ease of cultivation and their abundant flower production. Thousands of cultivars and hybrids have been bred.

Origins Geraniums are found in every continent apart from Antarctica, mainly in temperate regions. Common in woodlands and open meadows, they have also adapted to shallow soils and freezing temperatures at high altitudes.

Season Mainly summer-flowering, from May to September.

Size From small alpines 10cm tall to herbaceous perennials 1.2m tall.

Conditions A few species prefer cool, shady conditions but most thrive in sunny, open situations in rich, well-drained soil.

Hardy geraniums

They may have been known by only a handful of plant enthusiasts 60 years ago, but today cranesbills are hugely popular and suited to many kinds of garden

WORDS **JOHN HOYLAND** PHOTOGRAPHS **DIANNA JAZWINSKI**

***GERANIUM* ROZANNE (= 'GERWAT')**
A mass of flowers from June to October, *G.* Rozanne was found in Rozanne Waterer's Somerset garden in 1989. Once established, it forms a wide, neat clump. 50cm. AGM*. RHS H7, USDA 4a-8b†.

John Hoyland is a plantsman and garden writer who has gardens in both southeast England and southwest France.

Sixty years ago Margery Fish's book *We Made a Garden* was first published and it became an instant success with amateur gardeners. In it, she recounted how over the previous 20 years, she and her husband had developed their Somerset garden. She introduced her readers to plants such as astrantias, euphorbias and geraniums, which at the time were only known to small groups of plant enthusiasts. Fish was very forthright (and occasionally imperious) in expressing her opinions and her championing of hardy geraniums was unequivocal. She would later, famously, advise: 'When in doubt, plant a geranium.'

A lot of us must have taken her advice because today geraniums are one of the most popular herbaceous perennials. At the centennial Chelsea Flower Show in 2013, visitors voted *Geranium* Rozanne (= 'Gerwat') as Plant of the Centenary.

The fondness that gardeners have for the genus is not, of course, entirely due to the bossy Mrs Fish. Geraniums are easy to grow and generally adaptable, with species that are at home in the cool comfort of woodlands while others thrive in the baking harshness of screes. In addition, the loose and relaxed character of geraniums fits well with the informal planting styles that have dominated gardens for the past 60 years.

The popularity of geraniums and the commercial success of *Geranium* Rozanne (pictured left) has spurred on nurseries and plant breeders to introduce many new cultivars and hybrids. Some are launched with the razzmatazz of a sophisticated marketing campaign while others appear quietly in the catalogues of specialist nurseries. Sorting out the wheat from the chaff only happens after we have grown a plant for a few years. Already some recent introductions, including the examples featured on these pages, are beginning ▷

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*Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society.
†Hardiness ratings given where available.

▷ to show that they are worthy of a space in our gardens.

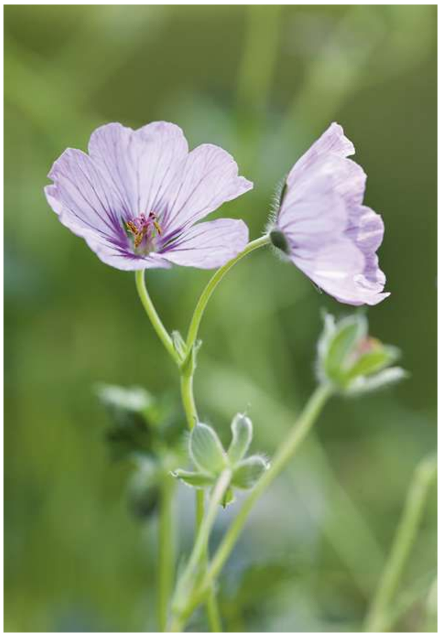
Geranium Rozanne was found as a seedling in a Somerset garden at the end of the 1980s and produces large blue flowers with a white eye from June to October. One of its parents is thought to be a form of *Geranium wallichianum*, and breeders have been looking to see if this species can provide a successful sibling to Rozanne. *G. wallichianum* 'Havana Blues' (see facing page) has flowers of a similar blue with dark purple veins on each petal. *G.* 'Rainbow' (page 62), another *G. wallichianum* cultivar, has large, blue flowers with pink tones at the base of the petals. Unusually, *G. wallichianum* 'Sylvia's Surprise' (page 61), which appeared in the Welsh garden of the eponymous Sylvia, has pink flowers. All three have the sprawling habit and long-flowering period of the species.

Breeders have also mined *G. cinereum* as a source of cultivars and as a parent in interesting hybrids. This European native alpine forms a neat hummock of foliage that is covered in small flowers in late spring and early summer. Cultivars tend to have pink, deep-red or magenta flowers and all need sunshine and well-drained soil.

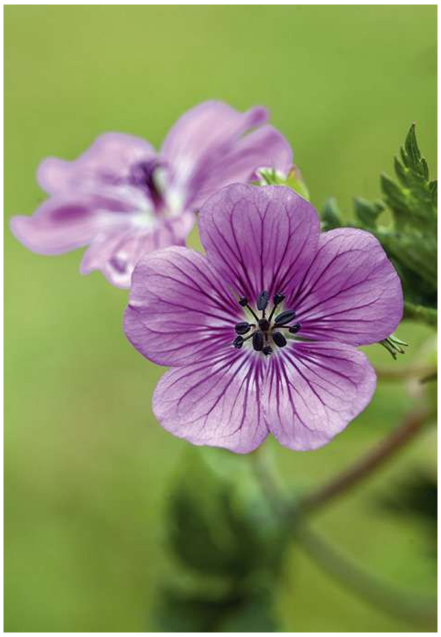
Most new introductions are chance seedlings but some are the result of breeding programmes. In Orkney, off the northeastern coast of Scotland, Alan Bremner has introduced many excellent geranium hybrids that have proved their value in the garden over the past 25 years. He has made thousands of cross pollinations of which few produce flowering plants and only a score have been sufficiently different to be named.

Sometimes new hybrids are marketed as improvements of existing plants. *G.* 'Eureka Blue' is a vigorous plant that develops a 1m-tall mound of large, blue flowers, much larger than its parent *G.* 'Orion' (page 63), which was itself a seedling of *G.* 'Brookside'. I still grow *G.* 'Brookside'. Whether you go for the latest hybrid or stick with the older examples is a matter of personal preference. Many new introductions are certainly exciting plants: Margery Fish would not be disappointed.

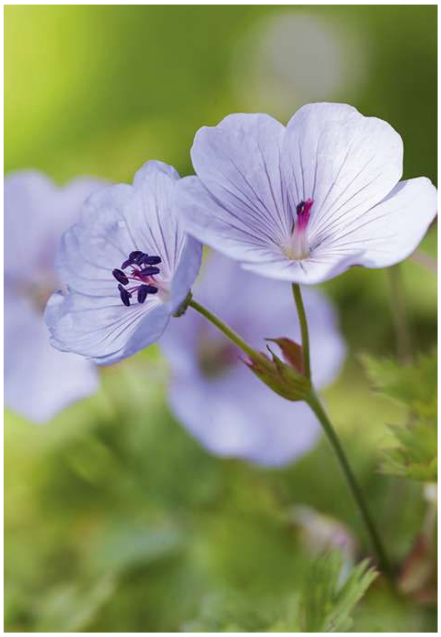
- John's recommendations for hardy geraniums continue over the next six pages.



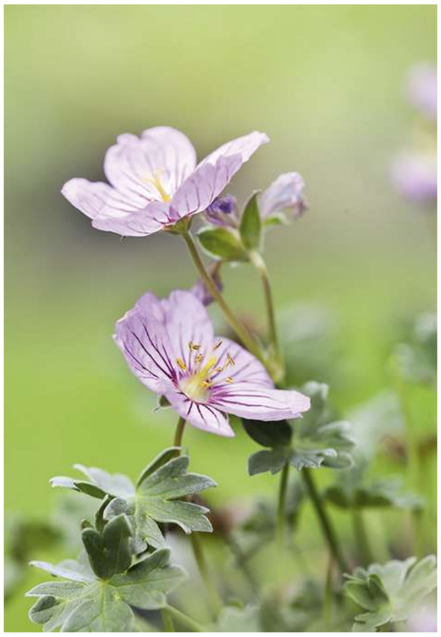
***GERANIUM CINEREUM* 'SOPHIE'**
A compact dome with large (2.5cm diameter) flowers mainly in May and June and sporadically thereafter. Will grow in sun or part shade but needs good drainage, especially in winter. 15cm. USDA 4a-9b.



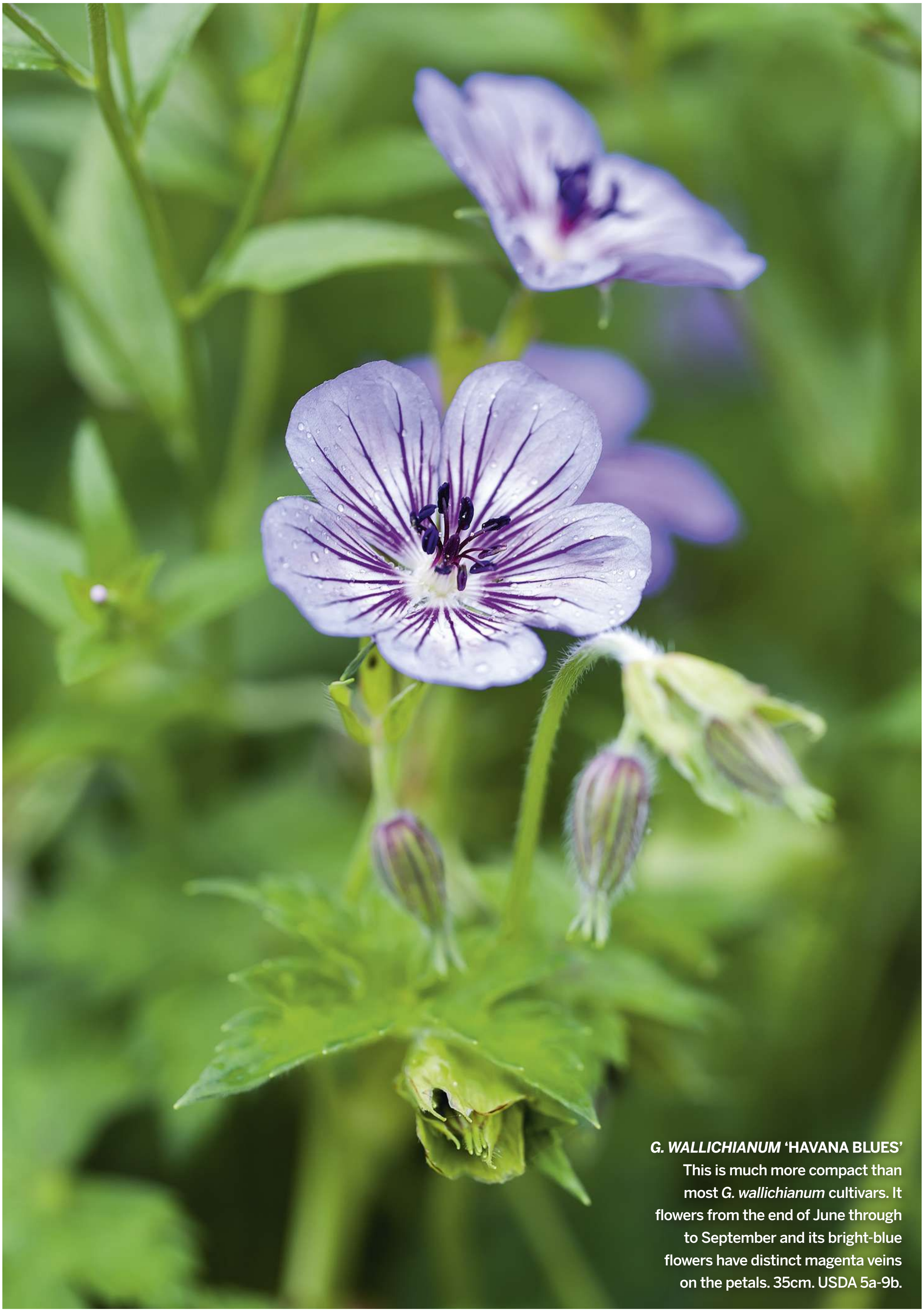
***G. WALLICHIANUM* 'ROSETTA'**
Deep-pink flowers with magenta veins on this selection made by Dutch nurseryman Hans Kramer. It flowers from mid-June through to September. 40cm (60cm spread). USDA 5a-8b.



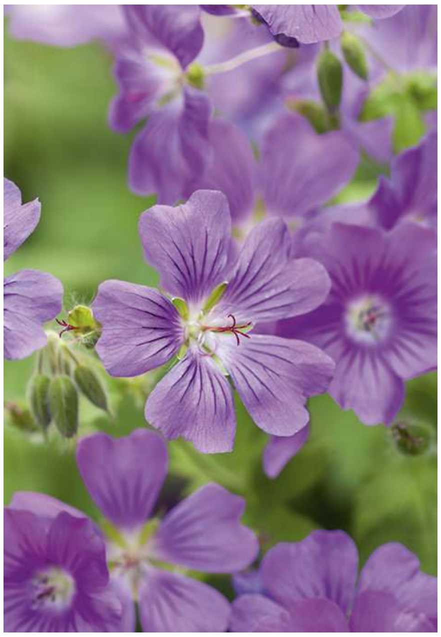
***G.* 'LILAC ICE'**
Plantsman Michael Steggles spotted this growing in a batch of *G.* Rozanne. It has delicate, pale-lilac flowers from June to September and looks good at dusk, when the flowers seem to glow. 40cm.



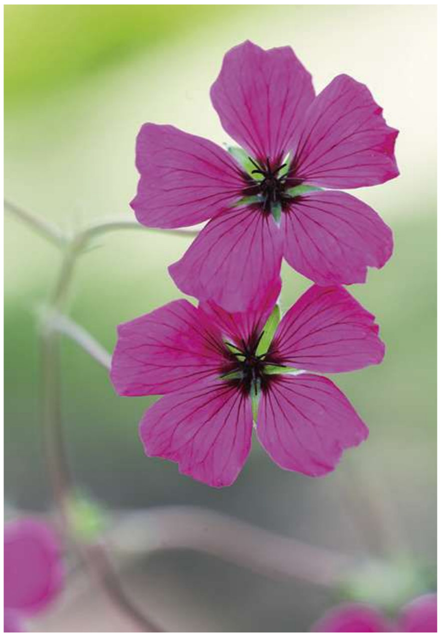
***G. CINEREUM* 'ALICE'**
Probably the largest flowers of a *G. cinereum* cultivar over evergreen foliage. Flowers profusely in July and again in September. It was introduced by the Devon nursery Border Alpines. 15cm. USDA 4a-9b.



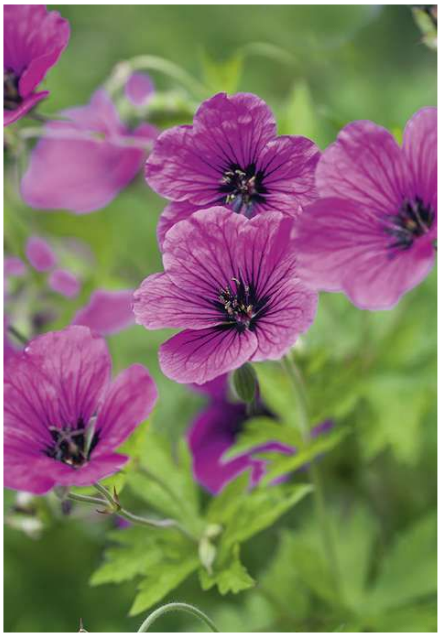
G. WALLICHIANUM **'HAVANA BLUES'**
This is much more compact than most *G. wallichianum* cultivars. It flowers from the end of June through to September and its bright-blue flowers have distinct magenta veins on the petals. 35cm. USDA 5a-9b.



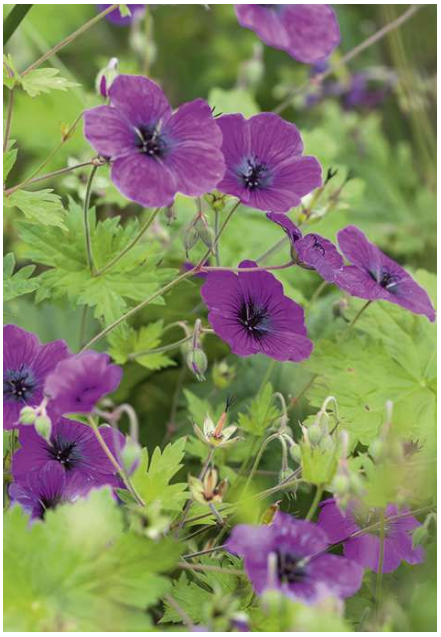
***G.* 'SIRAK'**
Lucent, lilac-pink flowers in June and July and then again towards the end of August as the temperature drops. It will grow in part shade as well as full sun. 50cm. AGM. USDA 5a-8b.



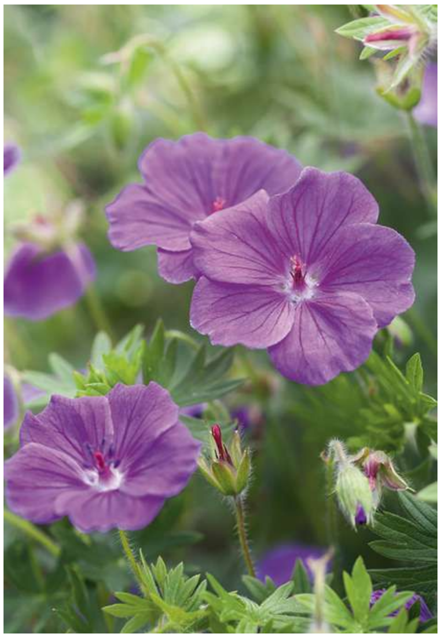
***G. CINEREUM* 'SIGNAL'**
A cultivar raised in Germany in the 1990s. It forms a neat dome of evergreen foliage that has a silvery-grey sheen. The bright magenta flowers also have a silvery tinge. 15cm. USDA 4a-9b.



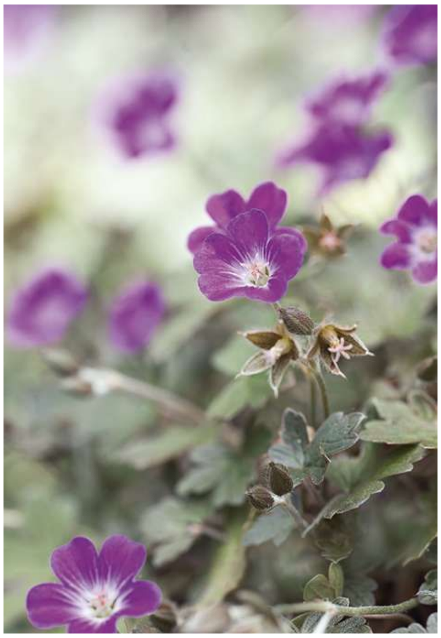
***G.* 'IVAN'**
'Ivan' is a big, muscular plant that grows tall and has startlingly bright magenta flowers. Its main flowering is during June and July with a few flowers later in the year if the whole plant is cut back. 1m. AGM. RHS H7.



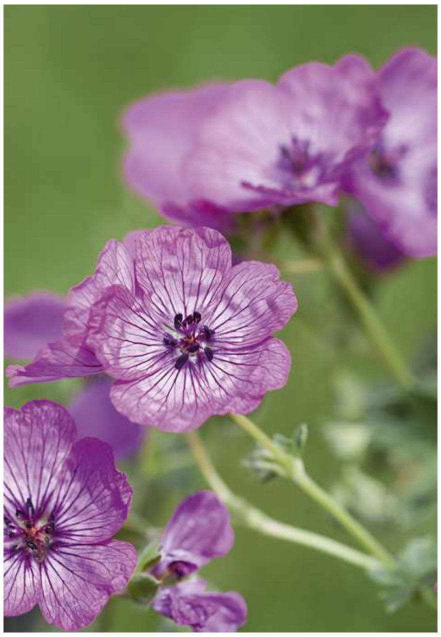
***G.* DRAGON HEART (= 'BREMDRA')**
Large, 4cm-wide, magenta flowers with a black centre and veining are produced in great abundance from June to September. 50cm (80cm spread). RHS H7, USDA 5a-8b.



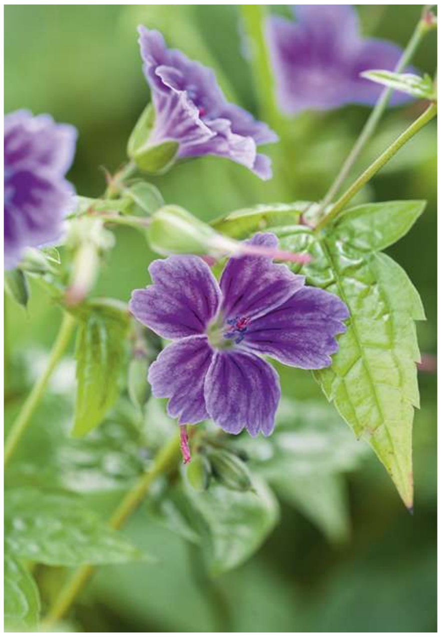
***G.* 'TINY MONSTER'**
A vigorous, sprawling geranium with vivid pink flowers that have slightly ruffled petals. The main flowering is in May and June with a second wave in late summer. 45cm (60cm spread). USDA 5a-9b.



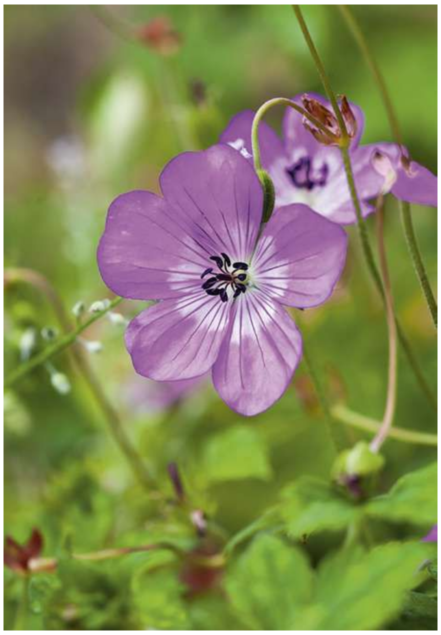
***G.* 'TANYA RENDALL'**
'Tanya Rendall' makes an attractive ground cover of olive-green leaves covered with an abundance of dark-pink flowers in June and July. 15cm (50cm spread). USDA 6a-9b.



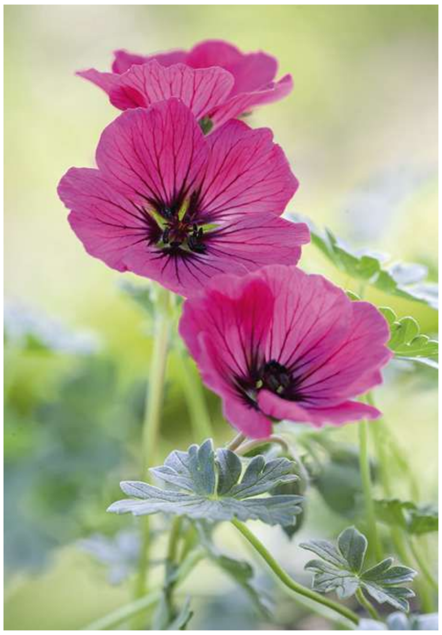
G. CINEREUM **'CAROL'**
Another new *G. cinereum* cultivar that starts blooming in June and continues on and off through the summer. Flowers best when given some shade from the midday sun. 15cm (25cm spread). USDA 4a-9b.



G. NODOSUM **'CLOS DE COUDRAY'**
The flowers, with rosy-purple petals that are delicately edged in white, are held on wiry stems above the plant's glossy foliage. Needs shady, woodland conditions. 25cm (35cm spread).



G. WALLICHIANUM **'SYLVIA'S SURPRISE'**
An eye-catching cultivar with vivid pink flowers that are up to 3.5cm wide and first appear in early summer and then sporadically until the end of autumn. Needs well-drained soil. 40cm. USDA 4a-8b.



G. CINEREUM **'MELODY'**
Of the recent *G. cinereum* cultivars, this is the one with flowers closest to red. Foliage is evergreen and leaves have a silvery sheen. Flowers in May and is sporadic until September. 15cm. USDA 4a-9b.

Cultivation

Most geraniums are robust and resilient plants that do not require special growing conditions other than fertile soil and a sunny situation. *G. cinereum* cultivars need good drainage and thrive in raised beds. *Geranium phaeum*, *G. maculatum* and *G. nodosum* are woodland plants and need shade. They suffer from mildew in very dry conditions. If this happens, the best solution is to cut the foliage back to a few centimetres from the ground.

Geraniums measuring more than 30cm tall tend to flop over and become unsightly after flowering. Cutting the plant down will produce a new flush of foliage and usually a second burst of flowers. Don't be half-hearted about cutting back. Take a pair of shears and chop the whole plant back to about 10cm from the ground.

What's in a name?

Plants in the related genus of *Pelargonium* are also popularly referred to as 'geraniums', which often leads to confusion. As long ago as 1901 *The Gardeners' Chronicle* was bemoaning the fact that 'the average gardener speaks of geraniums when he means pelargoniums'. The famous botanist Carl Linnaeus grouped geraniums with erodiums and pelargoniums into the single genus *Geranium*, but during the 19th century these were separated into distinct groups and given names that related to the shape of their seedpods. Resembling the beak of a heron, erodiums acquired their name from the Greek word for heron (*erodiós*) while geranium's seeds evoke the beak of a crane (*geranós*).

Pelargós, the Greek word for stork, provided the name for the final group, whose seedpods suggest the stout bill of this other long-legged bird. Vernacular names of cranesbill, heronsbill and storksbill are still used to describe each group. The important difference is in the shape of the flower: geraniums have five equally sized and regularly arranged petals, whereas the flowers on pelargoniums have two upper and three lower petals.

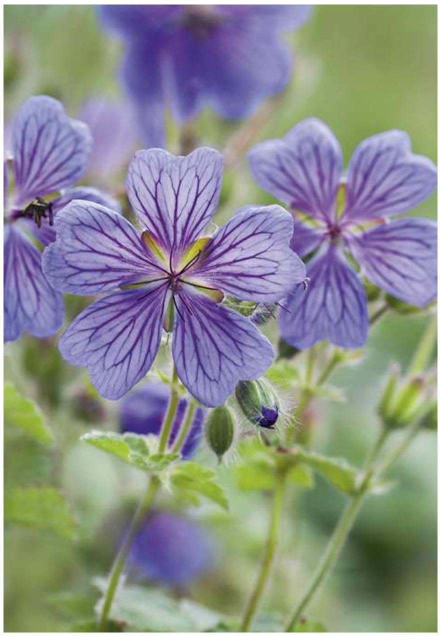
Where to see

- **Cambridge University Botanic Garden**
  1 Brookside, Cambridge CB2 1JE.
  Tel 01223 336265, botanic.cam.ac.uk
- **Susan Clarke** (*Geranium sylvaticum* and *renardii*) Wrens Nest, Wrenbury Heath Road, Wrenbury, Nantwich, Cheshire CW5 8EQ.
  Tel 01270 780704.
- **Mrs J Purkiss** (*Geranium phaeum*)
  1 Sycamore Close, Whitehaven, Cumbria CA28 6LE.
  Tel 01946 695831.
- **Dr M E Stone** (*Geranium sanguineum*, *macrorrhizum* and *cantabrigiense*) Brockamin, Old Hills, Callow End, Worcestershire WR2 4TQ.
  Tel 01905 830370.
- **Mrs J Taylor** (*Geranium nodosum*)
  Silverwood House, Gardeners Lane, Romsey, Hampshire SO51 6AD.
  Tel 023 8081 4345, birchwoodplants.co.uk

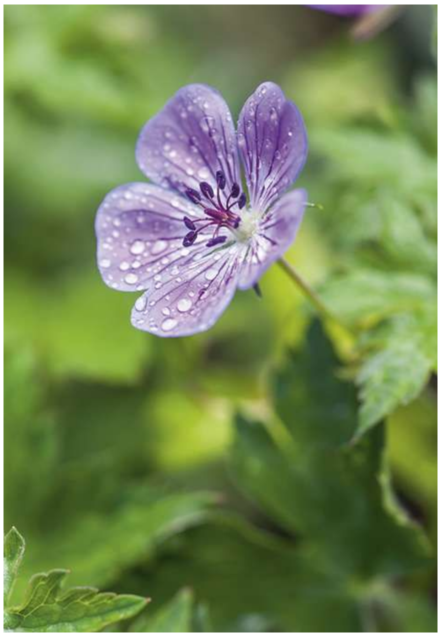
Where to buy

- **Ashwood Nurseries**
  Ashwood Lower Lane, Kingswinford, West Midlands DY6 0AE.
  Tel 01384 401996, ashwoodnurseries.com
- **The Beth Chatto Gardens**
  Elmstead Market, Colchester, Essex CO7 7DB.
  Tel 01206 822007, bethchatto.co.uk
- **Cranesbill Nursery**
  1 Waverley Road, Mossley Estate, Bloxwich, Walsall WS3 2SW.
  Tel 01684 770733, cranesbillnursery.com
- **Fairweather's Garden Centre**
  High Street, Beaulieu, Hampshire SO42 7YB.
  Tel 01590 612307, fairweathers.co.uk
- **The Plantsman's Preference**
  Church Road, South Lopham, Diss, Norfolk IP22 2LW.
  Tel 07799 855559, plantpref.co.uk

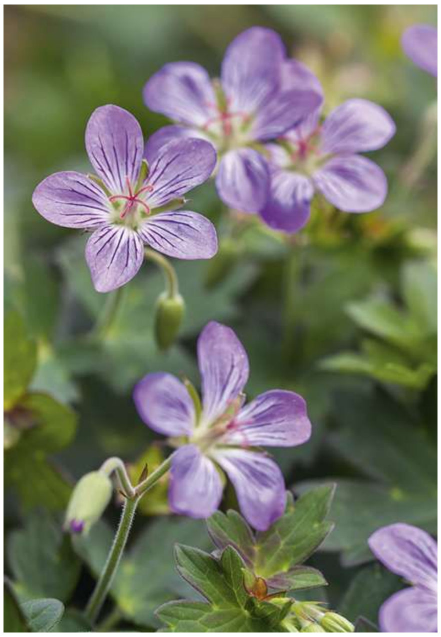
The Hardy Plant Society has a group devoted to geranium enthusiasts. hardy-plant.org.uk/geranium/



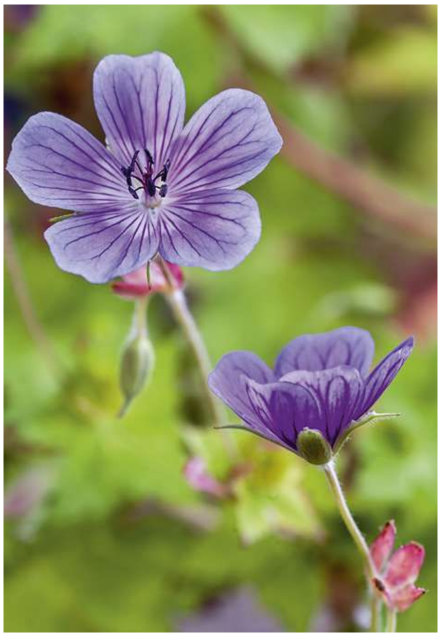
***G.* 'TERRE FRANCHE'**
Similar to 'Philippe Vapelle', which like this is bred from *G. renardii*. Its grey-green, velvety leaves form an attractive dome, and the purple flowers have beautiful blue veins that are outlined in red. 50cm. USDA 5a-9b.



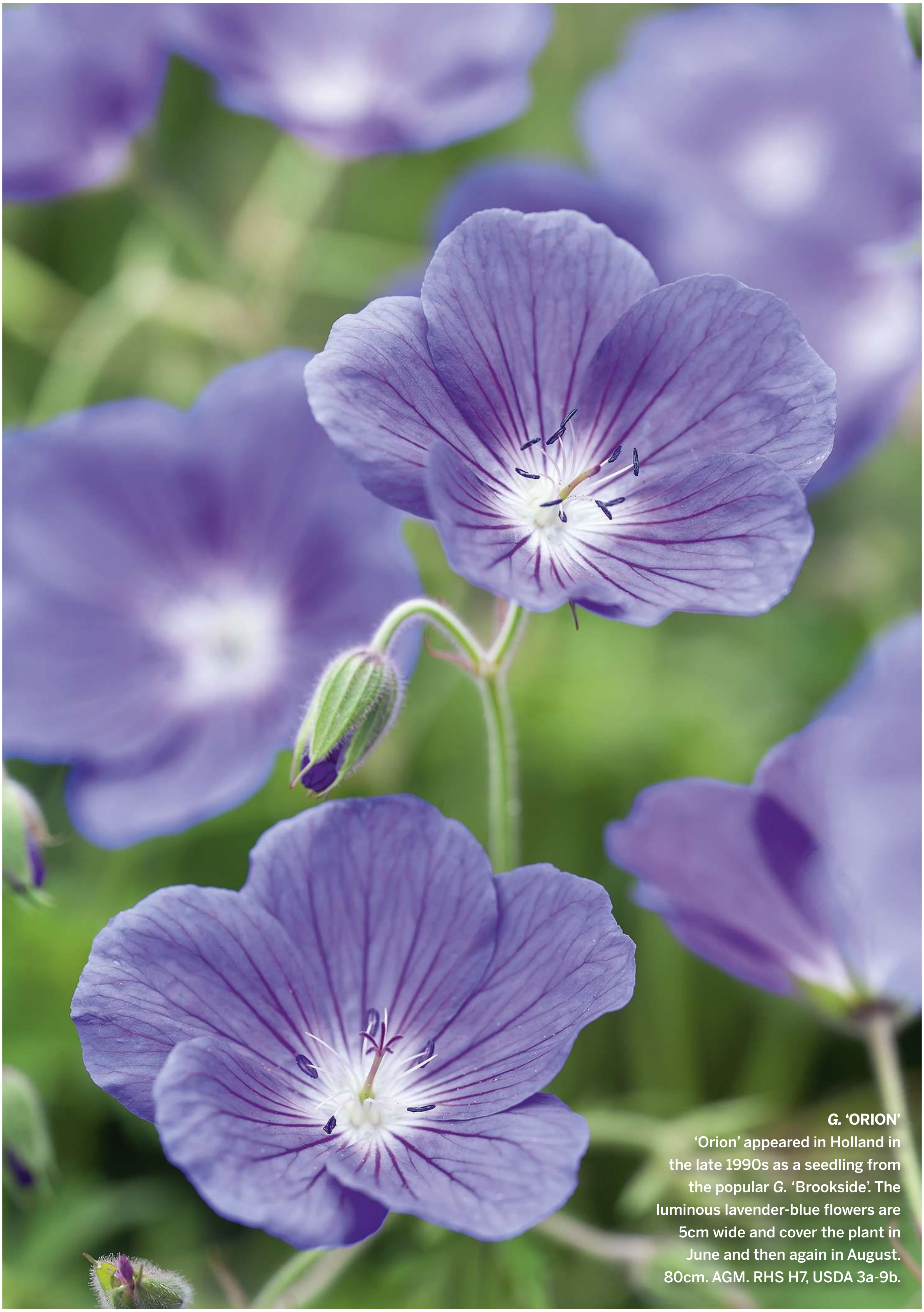
***G.* 'SWEET HEIDY'**
A new introduction that the breeders claim is the result of a quest to produce a plant to rival *G.* Rozanne. The size and habit are similar to its competitor; flowers are lavender-blue. 50cm. USDA 5a-8b.



***G.* 'FAY ANNA'**
The new foliage emerges an unexpected pink-flushed gold and matures to an olive-green before becoming flaming red and bronze in the autumn. The pale lilac flowers appear from June to August. 30cm.



***G.* 'RAINBOW'**
The blue background of the petals merges with purple veining and a pink hue at the base of the petals to create an unusual effect – not quite a rainbow but attractive nonetheless. 38cm. USDA 4a-8b.



G. 'ORION'
'Orion' appeared in Holland in the late 1990s as a seedling from the popular *G.* 'Brookside'. The luminous lavender-blue flowers are 5cm wide and cover the plant in June and then again in August. 80cm. AGM. RHS H7, USDA 3a-9b.

MANY THANKS TO JOHN DILKES, THE FORMER OWNER OF CRANESBILL NURSERY AND TO PATRICK FAIRWEATHER OF FAIRWEATHER'S GARDEN CENTRE WHERE THESE IMAGES WERE TAKEN.

Twigs Way

The accidental garden historian on inspiring women writers, the enigmatic draw of historic gardens and the fun of finding floral monikers for her rabbits

WORDS **CLAIRE MASSET** PORTRAIT **CHARLIE HOPKINSON**

Academics can be stuffy and abstruse. Not so Twigs Way. The historian, author, lecturer and researcher approaches garden history with a sense of fun that almost belies her learning. But don't be fooled: she knows her subject inside out.

A penchant for the human angle has steered Twigs towards the social and cultural aspects of gardens. *Virgins, Weeders and Queens*, one of her first books, is a history of women in the garden. It brims with personal stories, anecdotes and detail. So does *A Nation of Gardeners*, a lively account of how the British developed their passion for gardening.

Twigs is a prolific and engaging writer. She deftly moves from broad histories to short introductions on key garden themes. Allotments, the cottage garden, Gertrude Jekyll, the Tudor garden, and – wonderfully – garden gnomes: each of these topics she explores with infectious curiosity. And each is illustrated with a compelling mix of new and old photographs, contemporary prints and postcards. *Topiary* shows extraordinarily shaped evergreens, from traditional peacocks, teapots and cones to giraffes, pigs and unicorns. There's even a topiary table with glasses and a decanter. *Allotments* features, among its many illustrations, charming early 20th-century postcards depicting the fervour inspired by the early years of the allotment movement.

How did she come to garden history? "It was a mistake," she says. "I worked as an archaeologist for several years, then went on to do a PhD in designed landscapes. At the time people assumed I was an expert on gardens, but I wasn't." Her interest was piqued, however, and she started teaching herself. Soon Twigs was devising courses and lecturing for the University of Cambridge. Today, as well as writing, she gives talks for a number of organisations, including the National Association of Decorative and Fine Arts Societies (NADFAS) and the Cambridge University Botanic Garden, and is also a consultant on historic gardens.

"To teach garden history you have to look at everything – every aspect of social, political, technological, art and architectural history," she says. "I find that enormously challenging and enormously interesting. I love coming at history from all directions and finding as many links as possible." Published this November, her new book – *Carnation* – does just that. The first cultural history of carnations and pinks, it takes you on a thrilling journey from the Ottoman Empire to the aestheticist world of Oscar Wilde. Topics are as broad as the book's geographical and historical reach, ranging from plant names, art and symbolism to rituals, floristry and medicine.

As a reader, Twigs has a fondness for early women garden writers. Marie Theresa Villiers Earle, who penned *Pot-Pourri From A Surrey Garden* (1897) and Viscountess Wolseley who, like Elizabeth von Arnim, wrote about how gardening gives women freedom, are particular favourites. "I love the idea of being able to express yourself as a woman through your writing and your garden." Among current writers, Twigs particularly enjoys reading Tim Richardson and Timothy Mowl. "I always look forward to their books."

A favourite 'contemporary' garden is at Boughton House near Geddington in Northamptonshire. "It's a superb example of an 18th-century 'landform' matched with a recent one," she says. "I love the scale of the features, the different textures and the qualities of water and grass. Restoration and research is ongoing and features are still being revealed. There's a degree of enigma to the site as it is now. Enigma always draws me."

Does she think an awareness of garden history is key to enjoying gardens? "We can all enjoy ice cream without knowing when it was first made," she says. "History can add to your experience, but only if you want to access that history." She once warned students that their newly acquired knowledge would forever affect their enjoyment of gardens. Once you know about gardening styles, planthunters and garden makers, your experience is no longer a straightforward aesthetic response. But, as Twigs admits, "there are many ways to enjoy a garden". A gardener herself, she laughs that her choice of plants is not always based on horticultural considerations, but influenced by a love for certain garden designers, plants names and associated stories. "Thankfully, Gertrude Jekyll is a forgiving rose," she smiles.

Plant names have also seeped into her other passion: adopting rescue rabbits. She and her partner now have more than 30 of them. "After Sweet Pea, came Parsnip and Bramble, then Damson and Quince and Teasel. We have had all sorts: Eglantine, Woodbine, Meadowsweet, Silverleaf, Apricot, Peach Blossom and even Himalayan Balsam. Every single one a flower or plant name," she says. She's even written a book about rabbits and gardens called *Foraging for Rabbits*. There's no doubt that Twigs' love of gardens permeates every aspect of her life. Long may it continue to affect her readers and students. □

USEFUL INFORMATION
Carnation by Twigs Way will be published by Riaktion Books on 1 November. You can find out more about Twigs' writing at twigsway.com

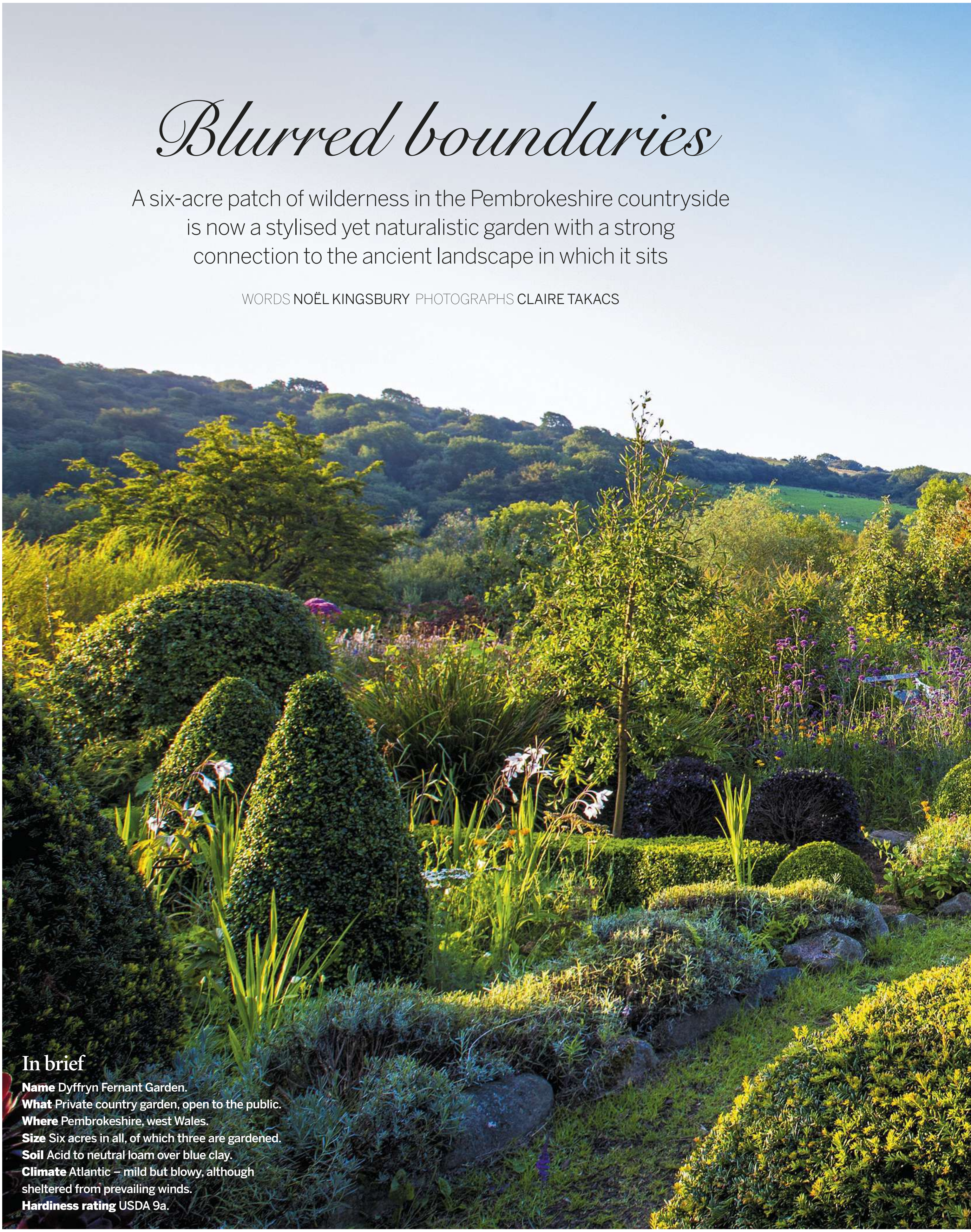
NEXT MONTH Lady Christine Skelmersdale of Broadleigh Gardens.

> *"I love the idea of being able to express yourself as a woman through your writing and your garden"*

Blurred boundaries

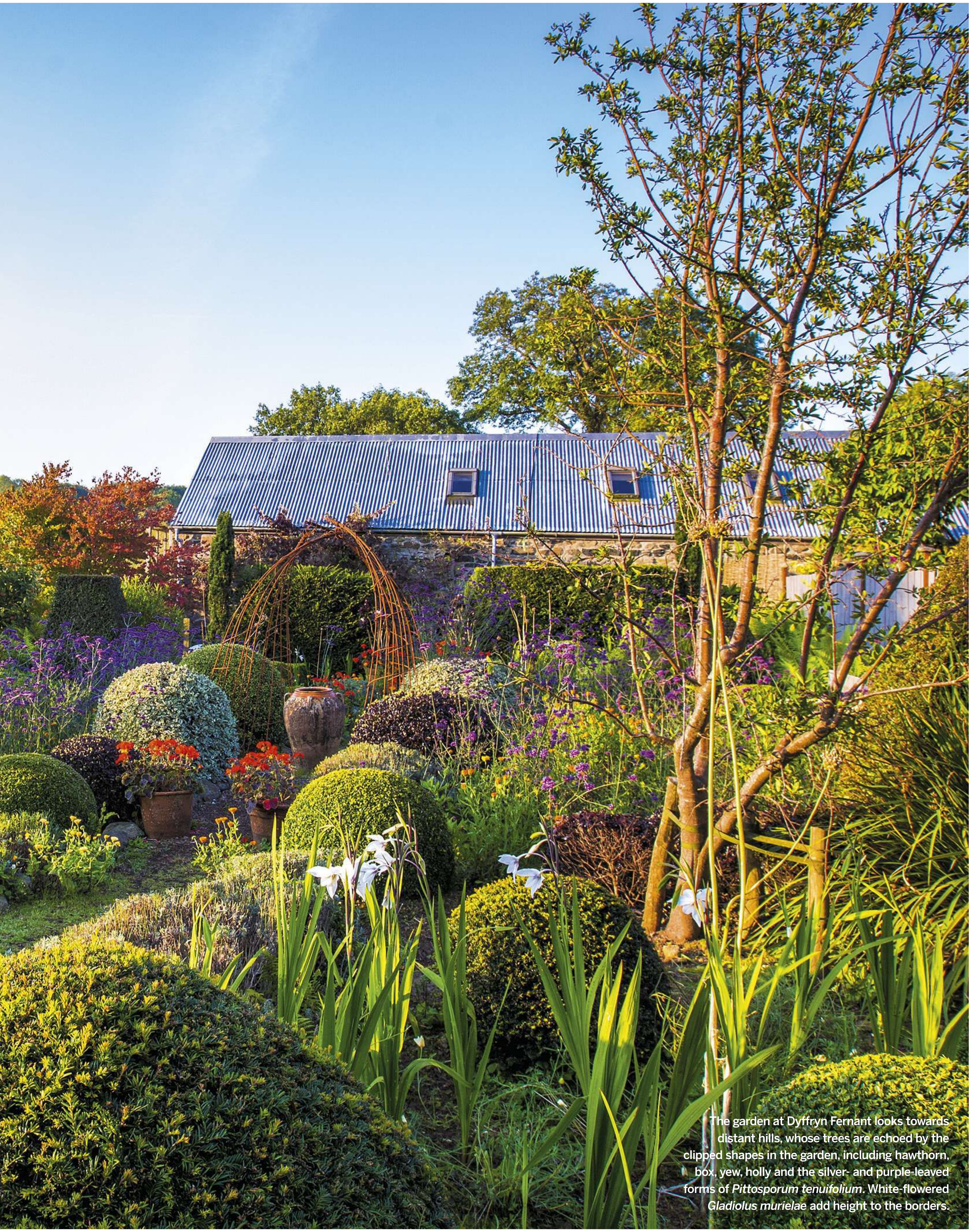
A six-acre patch of wilderness in the Pembrokeshire countryside is now a stylised yet naturalistic garden with a strong connection to the ancient landscape in which it sits

WORDS NOËL KINGSBURY PHOTOGRAPHS CLAIRE TAKACS

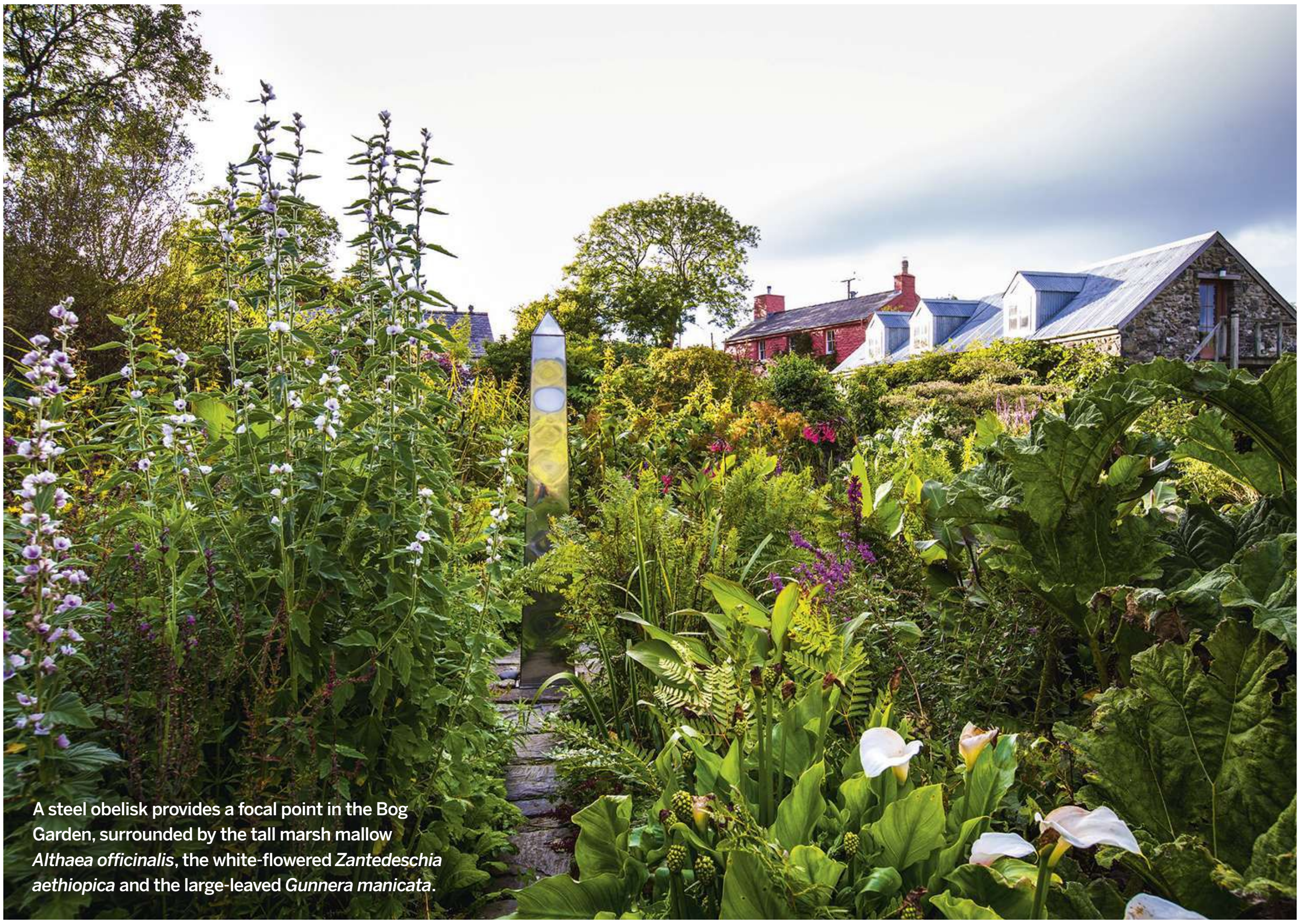


In brief

Name Dyffryn Fernant Garden.
What Private country garden, open to the public.
Where Pembrokeshire, west Wales.
Size Six acres in all, of which three are gardened.
Soil Acid to neutral loam over blue clay.
Climate Atlantic – mild but blowy, although sheltered from prevailing winds.
Hardiness rating USDA 9a.



The garden at Dyffryn Fernant looks towards distant hills, whose trees are echoed by the clipped shapes in the garden, including hawthorn, box, yew, holly and the silver- and purple-leaved forms of *Pittosporum tenuifolium*. White-flowered *Gladiolus murielae* add height to the borders.



A steel obelisk provides a focal point in the Bog Garden, surrounded by the tall marsh mallow *Althaea officinalis*, the white-flowered *Zantedeschia aethiopica* and the large-leaved *Gunnera manicata*.

Country gardens are typically orderly and highly managed affairs close to the house and then become progressively wilder as they extend outwards, a gradient of culture giving way to nature. Christina Shand and David Allum's garden in Pembrokeshire, west Wales, is one such garden but both ends of the gradient are somehow more extreme than normal. And the end point, the view beyond the garden, is of the stone outcrop Garn Fawr, a mile away in the distance.

The garden at Dyffryn Fernant was a complete wilderness when Christina and David arrived 22 years ago. "It had been a holiday cottage, totally abandoned and choked with weeds," says Christina. "It lacked topsoil and had far too much rock, marsh, bog and thick blue clay." Being on the west coast of Wales, it could also feel bleakly open to the elements, but it is enclosed by small, hedge-parcelled fields typical of this area, plus winters are mild. Today, up by the house the garden is intensely cultivated and stylised – there are vibrant and bold agapanthus, dahlias and salvias – and every possible little niche seems to have something growing in it. Looking the other way, outwards towards the open landscape, the garden grows more naturalistic and there are big masses of rather wild-looking perennials, grasses and what are clearly wildflowers seeping in from the surroundings.

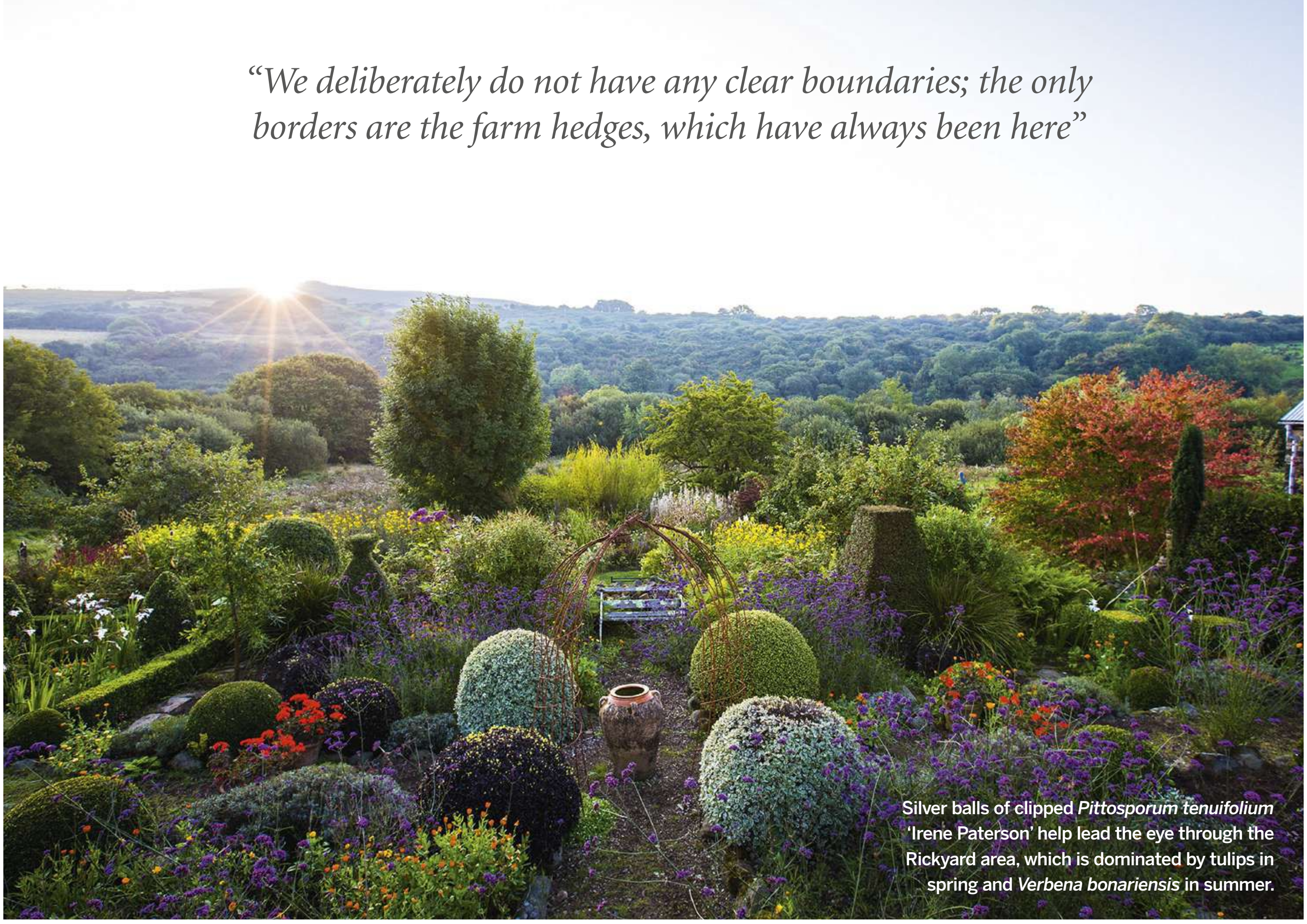
The outer reaches of this six-acre plot are largely semi-natural and managed rather than gardened. A wet meadow, known as Waun Fach, with a distinct and diverse flora, is at its best when the *Angelica sylvestris* is in flower in late summer, while the more conventional orchard has perennial borders flourishing around some old apple trees, and the experimental Nicky's Field, named in memory of Christina's brother, is a rather austere chessboard of grasses planted in blocks.

Christina also talks of the garden as being between two extremes, how some areas offer vistas while others envelop the visitor. "The whole garden lies behind two feelings – the being up and looking at the landscape, and the looking down and being right in it," she says. Feelings is certainly the word, as this garden is an emotional one – there is a remarkable range of atmospheres here.

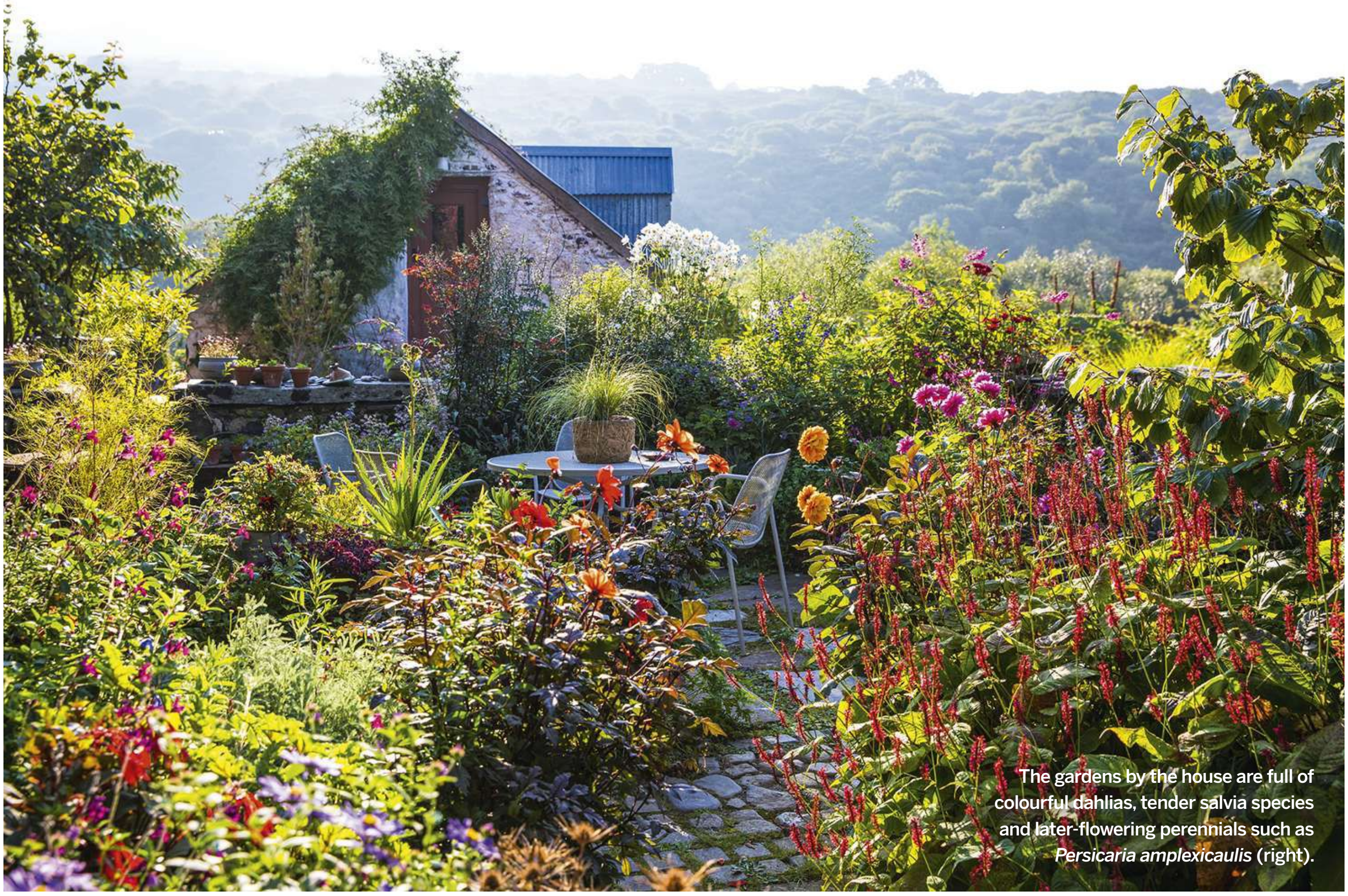
More than with most gardens, it's the location that makes Dyffryn Fernant so special. For Christina, this is crucial. "I had a business selling garden antiques not far from here and people loved my garden there," she says. "I had an identity through it, but this garden is about where it is, in this particular landscape." And it is the landscape that mostly inspires Christina, who learned all about gardening from reading Christopher Lloyd and Beth Chatto. Who wouldn't be influenced by these environs? Garn Fawr is part of the Preseli Hills, the place from where the Stonehenge bluestones were dragged 5,000 years ago and somewhere of immense spiritual significance to our ancestors. Comments in the garden visitor book often remark on the garden being a special and almost spiritual place. Its size means Christina has been able to divide it into areas with different connotations. But it also means it's a full-time job for

To continue turn to page 72 ▷

> *"We deliberately do not have any clear boundaries; the only borders are the farm hedges, which have always been here"*

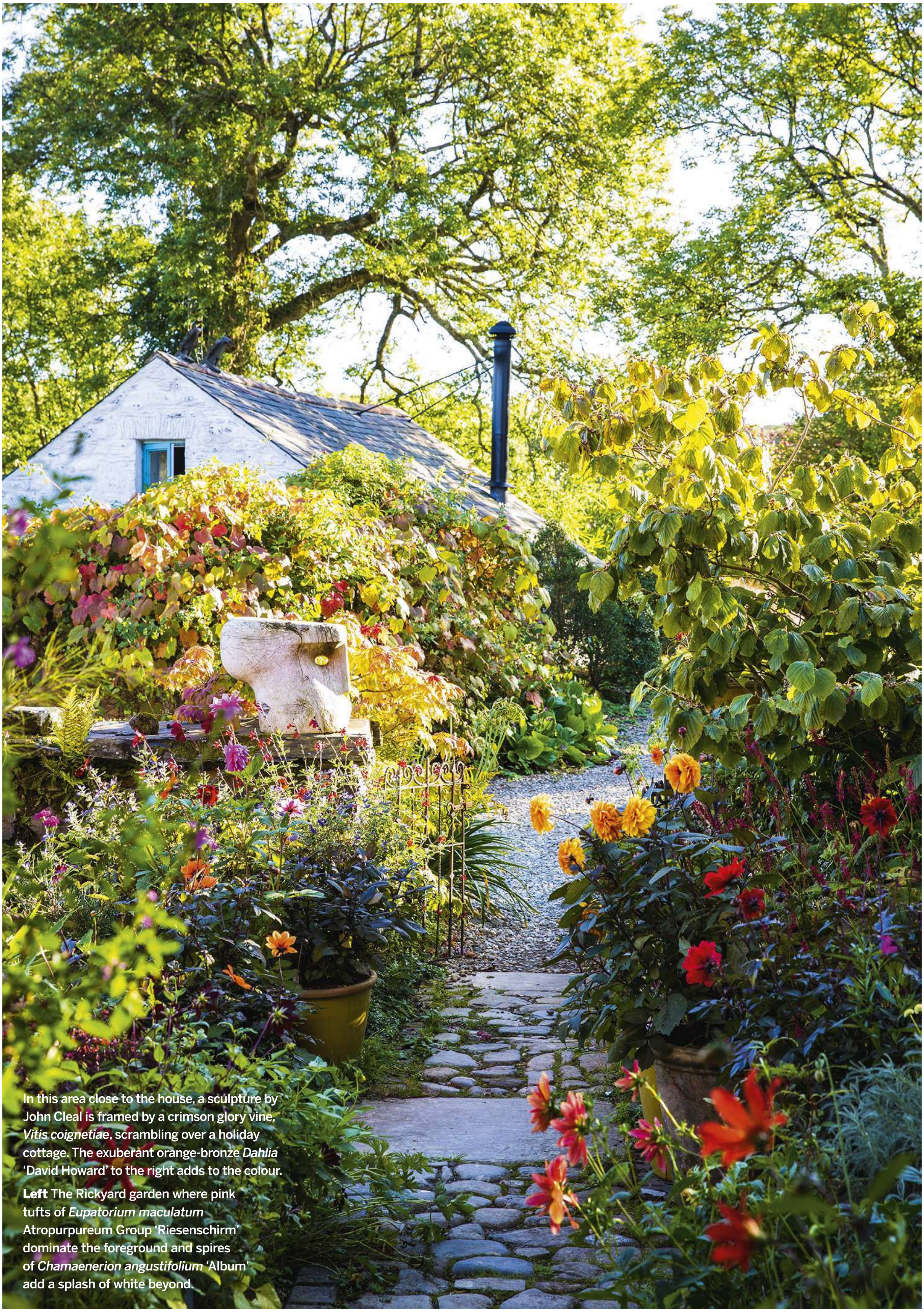


Silver balls of clipped *Pittosporum tenuifolium* 'Irene Paterson' help lead the eye through the Rickyard area, which is dominated by tulips in spring and *Verbena bonariensis* in summer.



The gardens by the house are full of colourful dahlias, tender salvia species and later-flowering perennials such as *Persicaria amplexicaulis* (right).

Wildflowers are welcomed into the garden. This blurs the boundaries between landscape and garden, connecting local plant communities



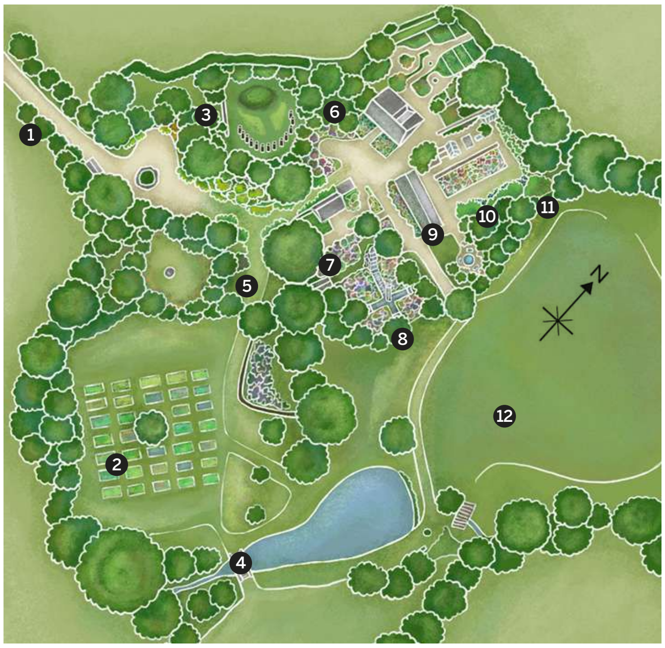
In this area close to the house, a sculpture by John Cleal is framed by a crimson glory vine, *Vitis coignetiae*, scrambling over a holiday cottage. The exuberant orange-bronze *Dahlia* 'David Howard' to the right adds to the colour.

Left The Rickyard garden where pink tufts of *Eupatorium maculatum* Atropurpureum Group 'Riesenschirm' dominate the foreground and spires of *Chamaenerion angustifolium* 'Album' add a splash of white beyond.

The Courtyard garden, with swords of *Miscanthus sinensis* 'Gracillimus' in the foreground, looks out towards Garn Fawr. Exotic foliage includes *Eriobotrya japonica* on the left and *Melianthus major* centre right.

GARDEN PLAN

1 Entrance
2 Nicky's Field
3 Magic Garden
4 The Pond
5 Fernery
6 Front Garden
7 Courtyard
8 Bog Garden
9 Library
10 Rickyard
11 Orchard
12 Waun Fach



HANNAH McVICAR

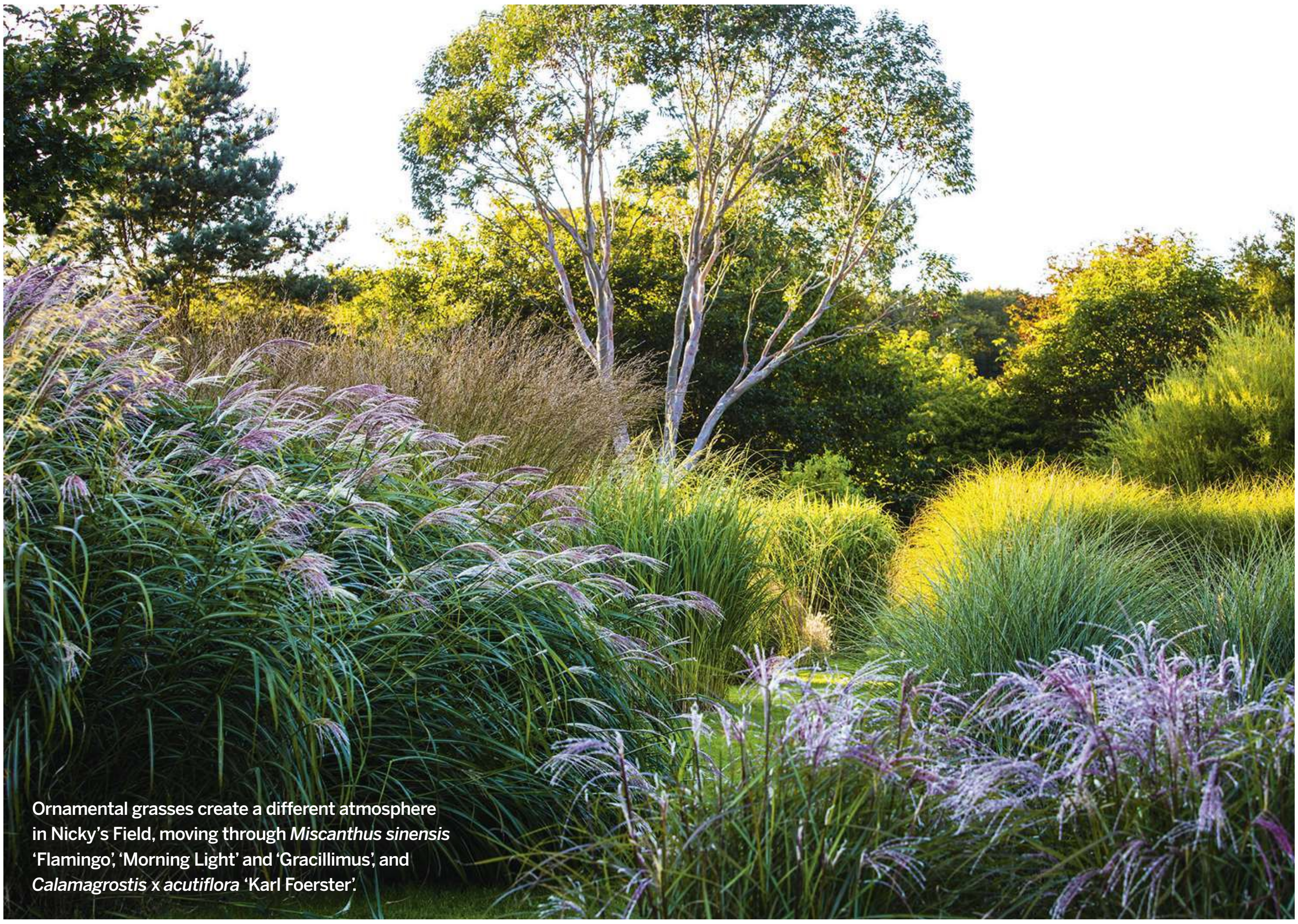
▷ Christina, who has three days of help a week to keep on top of maintenance and refreshing the planting.

The wilder periphery of the garden is where Christina and David are learning – largely by trial and error – to manage and keep a delicate balance. "It's important to keep some complete mayhem," says Christina. What is most problematic, is the occasional aggressive species that overwhelms others; currently hemlock water dropwort, one of the most toxic plants in the European flora. "The only way we can deal with it is with weed killer," says Christina. Otherwise, it is a case of thinning out blackthorn suckers and mowing paths. "Mowing is interesting," she says. "We mow at different levels to create a tapestry of different wildflower species." There are also spotted and early purple orchids. "We don't cut these areas until late – there's a lot of cutting and raking work at the end of the season." A lot of effort yes, but clearly worth it in creating this amazing fusion of wild and tame. □

USEFUL INFORMATION

Address Dyffryn Fernant Garden, Llanychaer, Fishguard, Pembrokeshire SA65 9SP.
Tel 01348 811282.
Website dyffrynfernant.co.uk
Open Every day, April to October, 12-6pm.

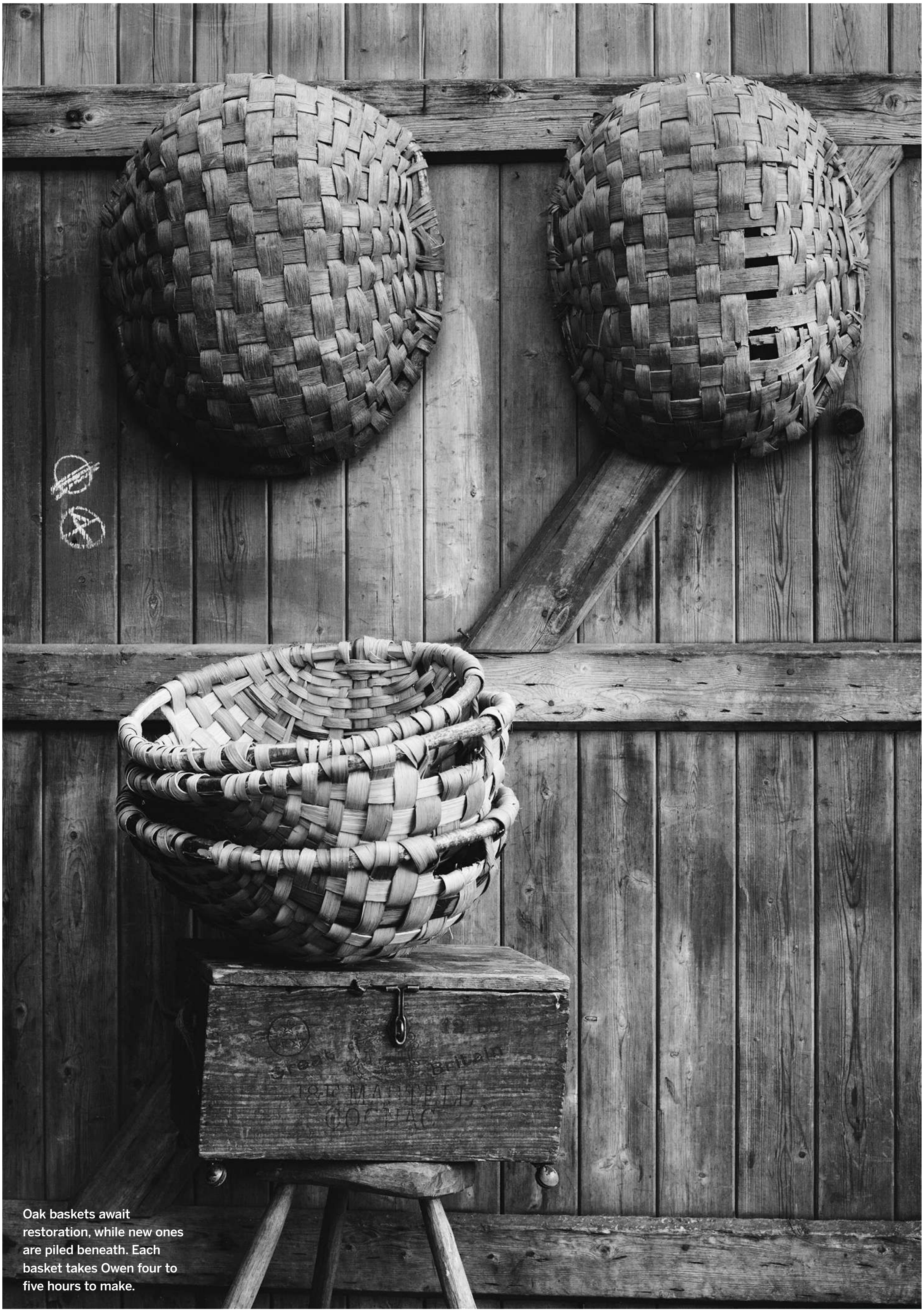
- Read a longer version of this feature at **gardensillustrated.com**



Ornamental grasses create a different atmosphere in Nicky's Field, moving through *Miscanthus sinensis* 'Flamingo', 'Morning Light' and 'Gracillimus', and *Calamagrostis x acutiflora* 'Karl Foerster'.

> *"The only management we do on the outer edges is control problem species and mow paths. A few exotic plants remind us this is still a garden"*

The Magic Garden is sited above the house. From here you can glimpse the coast in one direction. Wildflower-rich meadow grass is dissected by mown paths.


Great Britain
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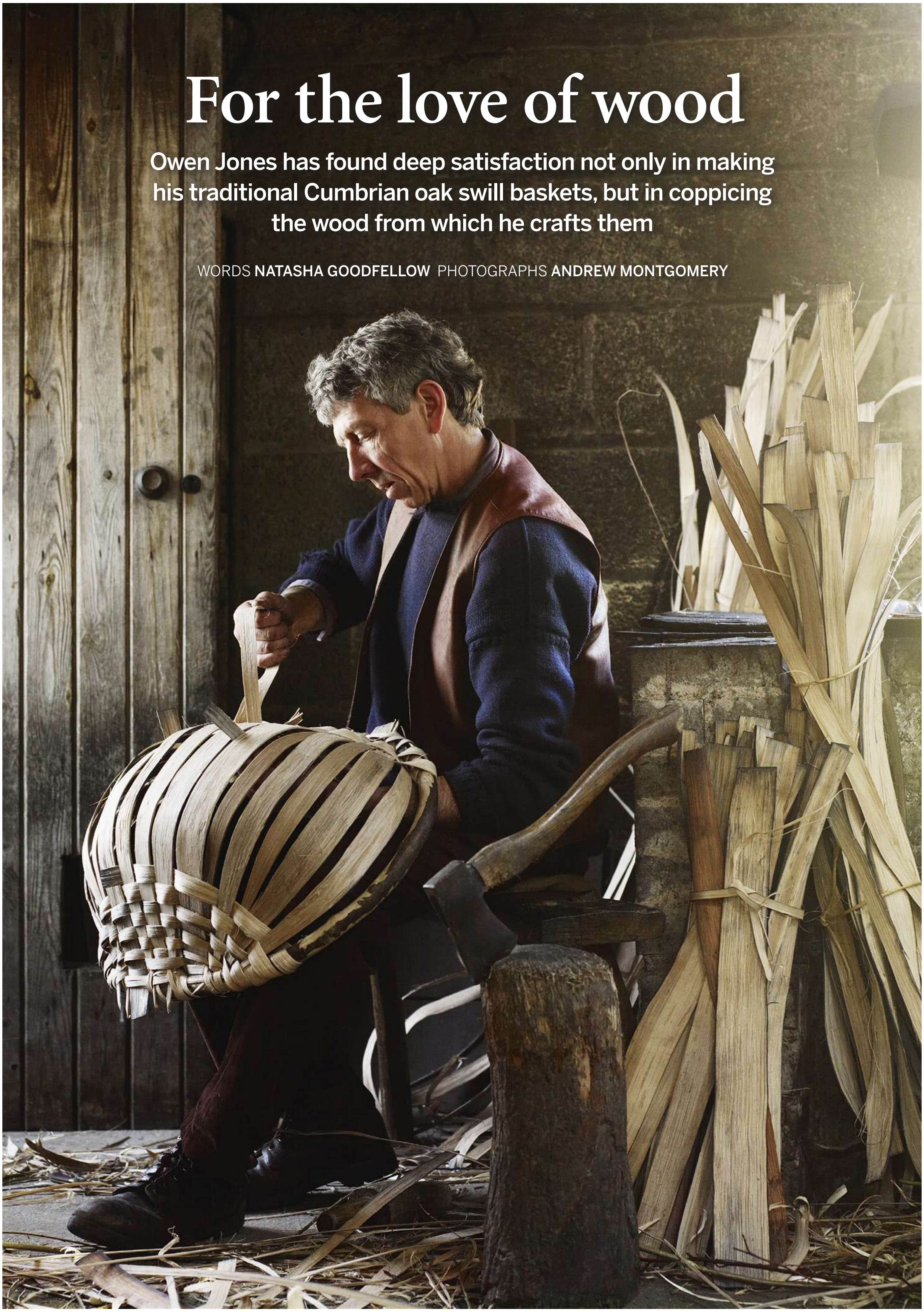
Oak baskets await restoration, while new ones are piled beneath. Each basket takes Owen four to five hours to make.



For the love of wood

Owen Jones has found deep satisfaction not only in making his traditional Cumbrian oak swill baskets, but in coppicing the wood from which he crafts them

WORDS **NATASHA GOODFELLOW** PHOTOGRAPHS **ANDREW MONTGOMERY**

Hearing him talk – about the beauty of the woods, the campfires and camaraderie of the shows – it's clear how much joy every part of the process brings him

A couple of years ago, Owen Jones, one of the very few remaining makers of the traditional Cumbrian oak swill basket, was featured on BBC One's *Countryfile*. "I don't have a television so I didn't see it," he tells me from his workshop on the shores of Coniston Water in the Lake District. He only realised the programme had aired when he checked his email inbox one evening and realised he'd had 250 orders within half an hour. A couple of days later, he'd had 400. "I printed them all out and it sent me into a bit of a spin," he recalls. "If I had tried to fulfil them all, I wouldn't have been able to sell any spontaneously that year and I couldn't have gone to the shows, which I love." In the end, he threw the whole lot into the fire.

It's not that Owen doesn't want people to buy his baskets; far from it (indeed, he was correct in reckoning that those who were seriously interested would get in touch again). But for him, his craft isn't merely a means of making a living. His entire life revolves around the baskets and, by extension, the woods from which he coppices his raw materials. Anything he cuts, he uses, so as well as the swills, he makes shopping baskets, birch besoms, oak gates, hazel hurdles, charcoal and clothes props. Although he never stops working for a second, hearing him talk – about the beauty of the woods, the campfires and camaraderie of the shows where he demonstrates and sells – it's clear how much joy every part of the process brings him.

Swill baskets – sturdy constructions made of thin strips of oak woven on to a hazel frame – have been common in Cumbria for centuries. Used for feeding animals and for broadcast seed sowing, demand rocketed during the Industrial Revolution in the early 19th century, particularly in the bobbin mills of the area. Owen, who was an aviation engineer by trade, was taught the craft in the late 1980s by John Barker, one of the last swillers in the area. "I feel privileged to have learnt from someone like him and to be working within the tradition; using the old language," he says.

The language is indeed entirely of its own. The hazel rod that forms the rim of the swill (which might be a 'half peck', a 'li'le nick', a 'peck' or a 'gurt nick', depending on its size) is the 'bool'. The 15 oak ribs are known as 'spelks' and the weaving lengths are 'taws', and both must be boiled to soften them before they can be riven – a very physical process that involves repeatedly driving a splitting blade into the wood and then tearing it apart to thin it. "It's only when you're riving that you really get to know the quality of the wood," says Owen. "On a good day, I might get 15 to 17 taws out of each piece of wood; sometimes it's only seven or eight."

Once riven, the spelks and taws are then 'dressed' to refine their shape, thickness and feel and only then can weaving begin. Again, it's the process rather than the end result that is Owen's focus. "You can't be too fussy," he says. "I think about rhythm and grace as much as the finished product."

Some of Owen's best work, he says, happens late at night, when there are no distractions and the only light is from the stars in the inky sky above. "I'm almost not conscious of what I'm doing," he says. "It's like a meditation, really." And clearly so much more than just a job. □

USEFUL INFORMATION

Owen demonstrates and sells at fairs throughout the year and will be at Borrowdale Shepherds' Meet (borrowdaleshow.org.uk) near Keswick on Sunday 18 September. For a full list, please visit Owen's website. He also runs several courses a year – the next is from 30 September to 2 October and costs £180 per person, including lunch and all materials.

Tel 01229 885664. **Website** oakswills.co.uk

Down the rabbit hole

James Golden's New Jersey garden is like entering another world, where visitors are enveloped by huge perennials and grasses

WORDS NOËL KINGSBURY PHOTOGRAPHS CLAIRE TAKACS

I must admit to having a deeply personal interest in this New Jersey garden. In 2001, its creator, James Golden, came across the book *Designing with Plants*, which I wrote with Piet Oudolf. James, a semi-retired marketing manager, says he was "powerfully moved by the book", adding that "its photographic details of plant shape, texture, colour, structure, and the rampant, almost tactile, beauty of the Oudolf garden photos… the big plantings recalled an *Alice in Wonderland* world… and the appreciation for all stages of a plant's life – even death in winter – hit my bullseye."

His awareness of an alternative to the sterile conventions of North American gardening had been previously aroused by the grassy naturalism of the work of James van Sweden and Wolfgang Oehme, which had by the early 2000s made quite an impact on the East Coast of America.

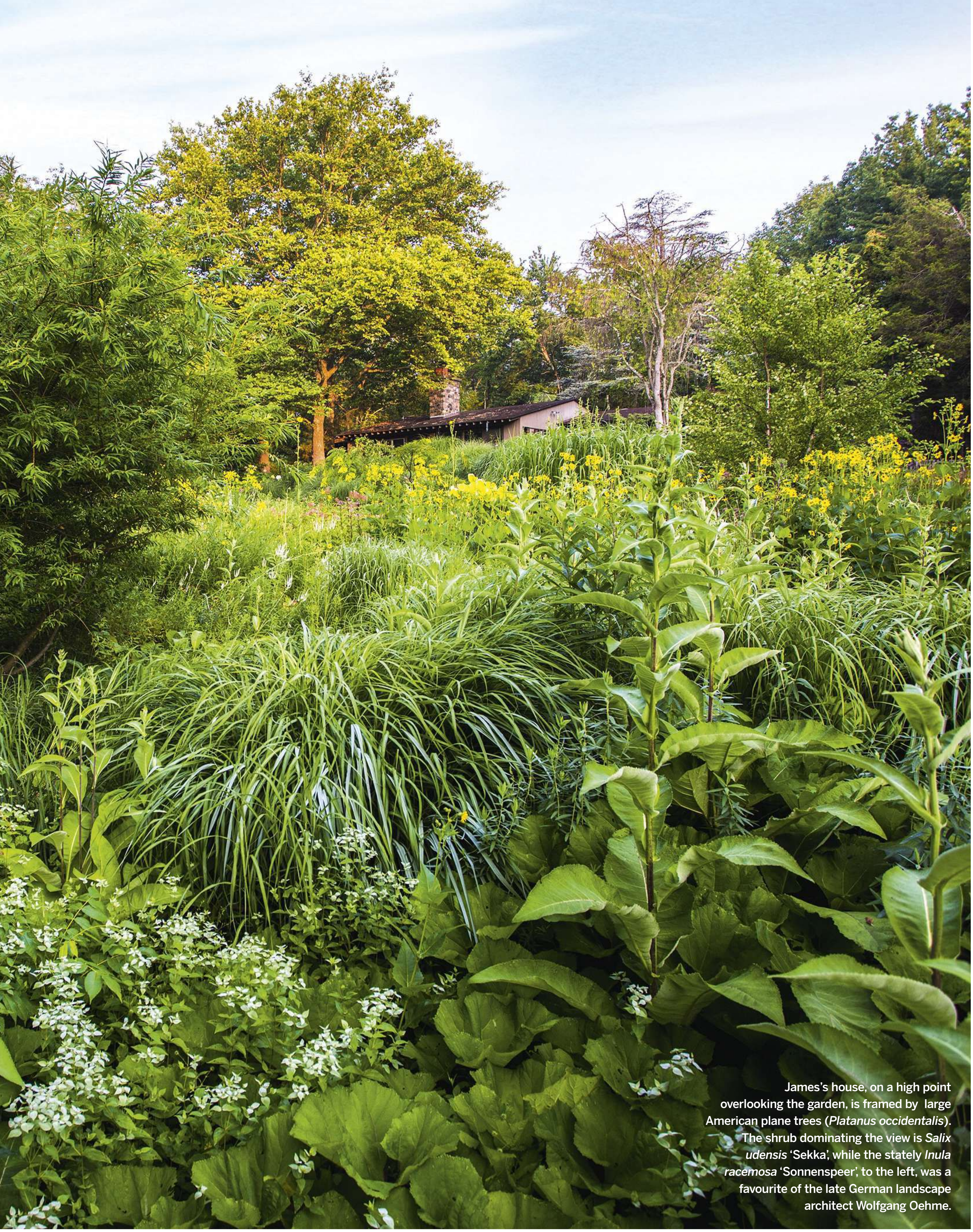
This is one of those immersive gardens, a secret world within a secret world. It is deep in the woods, where it forms a self-contained glade – a giant mass of grasses and large perennials surrounded by a wall of trees, mostly red maples and American beech. The lush perennial growth contrasts with the trees but forms the kind of environment you would expect to find here naturally.

There are just enough tell-tale signs of human presence to remind us that this is a garden: the occasional low-impact piece of sculpture, gravel paths, low walls (of the local rock argillite) and a few clipped evergreens. If they were not here, we could too easily be taken in that this really is all nature's doing.

James started the garden in 2006, having gardened in Brooklyn, where he is based for part of the week, and locally at Rosemont, New Jersey. "It's a prairie," he says, emphasising that the garden is on heavy, wet clay saturated for much of the year. "I cut down trees to create a clearing and planted many native plants, all carefully selected for the difficult growing conditions. Many non-natives too, if they liked wet clay. Most are highly competitive, even aggressive, and I try to match them so they keep each other in control. Then I stand aside and intervene only when necessary." Everything is big and there is clearly a lot of self-seeding going on but nothing seems to take over at anything else's expense. "I think of mess as a positive term," says James. "My gardening process ▷

In brief

Name The Garden at Federal Twist.
What A lushly naturalistic garden deep in the woods.
Where Central New Jersey, USA.
Size One and a half acres.
Soil Heavy, wet clay.
Climate Cold winters, warm and humid summers.
Hardiness rating USDA 6b.

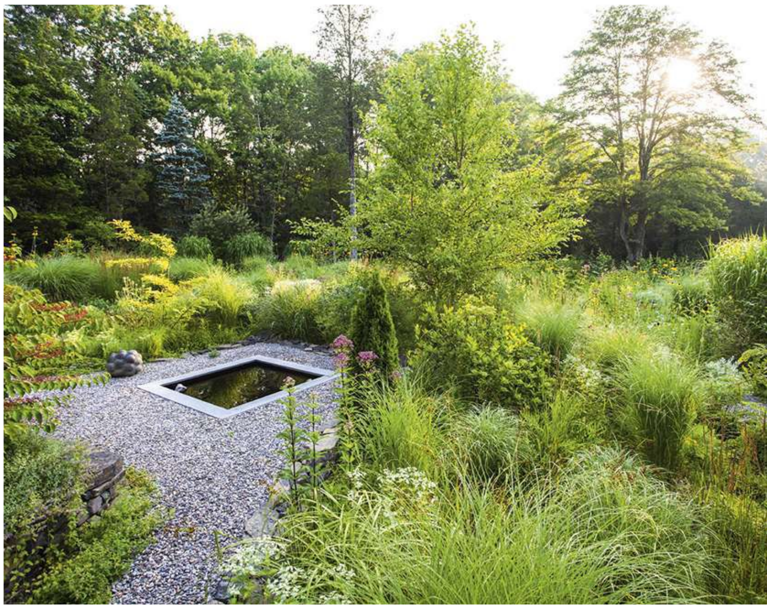


James's house, on a high point overlooking the garden, is framed by large American plane trees (*Platanus occidentalis*). The shrub dominating the view is *Salix udensis* 'Sekka', while the stately *Inula racemosa* 'Sonnenspeer', to the left, was a favourite of the late German landscape architect Wolfgang Oehme.

▷ is a series of interventions to control mess, refine line and legibility, and sculpt mass from mess."

He may grow lots of natives but he is no nativist. "I can't find the visual richness and expressiveness I want with native plants alone," he says. Nevertheless, the big natives seem to set the pace, along with Asian-origin *Inula racemosa* 'Sonnenspeer' and *Miscanthus* grass cultivars, which are large and visually dominant. James keeps it all in check with an annual burn: "You have to be careful of the miscanthus though – it almost explodes."

For somewhere that feels so hidden, it is a very public garden. That's because James shares it with the world through his blog, *View from Federal Twist*, which is an apt description, for it is a view not only out on to the garden through some stunning photography, but also the thinking aloud of one of the most reflective of gardeners. He quotes poetry and essays, and explores philosophical concepts in a seemingly endless attempt at understanding what he has made, and does so in an engaging and lyrical voice that pulls you into his inner world. Making it so digitally public, seems to underscore what a truly 21st-century garden this really is. □



USEFUL INFORMATION

Address 208 Federal Twist Road, Stockton, NJ 08559, USA.

Website federaltwist.com

Open The Garden Conservancy (gardenconservancy.org) has an open day on 8 October, 10am-6pm. To arrange private visits, email federaltwistroad@gmail.com

Main image A path cutting across the heart of the garden is swamped by plants including yellow-flowered *Rudbeckia maxima* and the tall grass *Miscanthus* x *giganteus*.

Below, left to right

The perennials and grasses eventually conceal this area close to the house. The pool provides habitat for frogs, salamanders and other water-loving wildlife.

This part of the garden is intended to evoke a sense of mystery and the past. Historically, logs were a common form of seating in woodland environments.

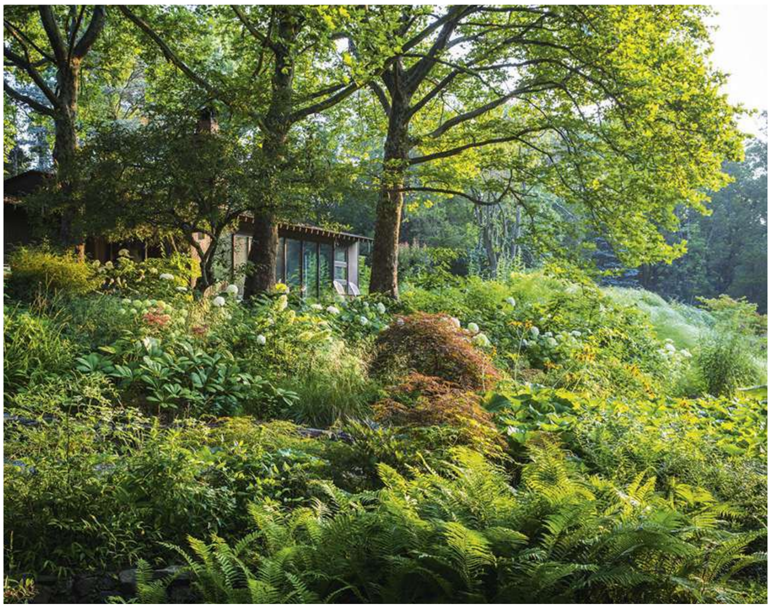
The floor-to-ceiling windows of the house allow views of the garden all year. The flamboyant ostrich fern *Matteuccia struthiopteris* adds to the abundant foliage.

Writing a garden blog

The garden blogosphere is an incredibly global one. Gardeners can often learn a surprising amount from people in different climate zones. Writing a garden blog is a great way to join an international community of gardeners. It is not just a way of sharing information or thoughts but also a way of reflecting on why you do what you do; it helps you think critically about your garden.

- **Take photographs.** Lots of them; at all times of year; at different times of day; and in different weather conditions.
- **Use postings to think aloud about your decision-making.** What plants to get, paths to lay, whether or not to prune that shrub. This way you can share insights into the garden-making process.
- **List favourite plants (or ones you dislike).** Writing a whole posting about your experience of a plant is possibly going to be more than has been written about that plant than in any garden reference book.
- **Write about other gardens.** James often does this as it's a valuable way to contribute to our knowledge of good gardens.

James may grow lots of natives but he is no nativist. "I can't find the visual richness and expressiveness I want with native plants alone"



12
of James's favourite plants from his garden

1 *Veronicastrum virginicum* 'Album'
Tidy spires of white, midsummer flowers on very upright stems, which are good as seedheads too. Flowering lasts well in sun and fertile soil. 1.2m. AGM*. RHS H7, USDA 4a-9b†.

2 *Physostegia virginiana* 'Miss Manners'
Selected by American plantsman Darrell Probst for its well-behaved, non-invasive habit. Late-flowering and a particularly pure white. Best in sun or light shade in damp, fertile soil. It runs but can die out. 60cm. RHS H7, USDA 4a-8b.

3 *Astilbe chinensis* Purple Candles (= 'Purpurkerze')
Too bright a pink? But this is the one astilbe that looks good in winter too, as it has interesting, firm, narrowly conical seedheads. Mid to late summer. Sun or light shade in moist, fertile soil. 1m. RHS H7, USDA 3.

4 *Onoclea sensibilis*
This very distinctive, sensitive fern slowly spreads through underground runners. The autumn colour can be good, and the spore-bearing heads are a winter feature. Moist, fertile soil. 50cm. AGM. RHS H6, USDA 4a-9b.

5 *Vernonia fasciculata*
This flowers much earlier than other ironweeds, and is also shorter. It's a good, sturdy, upright, structure plant. Sun and fertile, moist soil. 1.2m. RHS H7, USDA 5a-8b.

6 *Eupatorium purpureum*
This mid- to late-summer flowering butterfly magnet seeds itself around here. It's tough and reliable and also has good winter structure. Best in sun with fertile, moist soil. 2m. RHS H7, USDA 4a-10b.

7 *Silphium perfoliatum*
Another plant that self seeds in the garden at Federal Twist. Silphiums are all big and bold and yellow. This one grows tall in full sun, on fertile soils. It can be aggressive though. 3m. AGM. RHS H7, USDA 4a-8b.

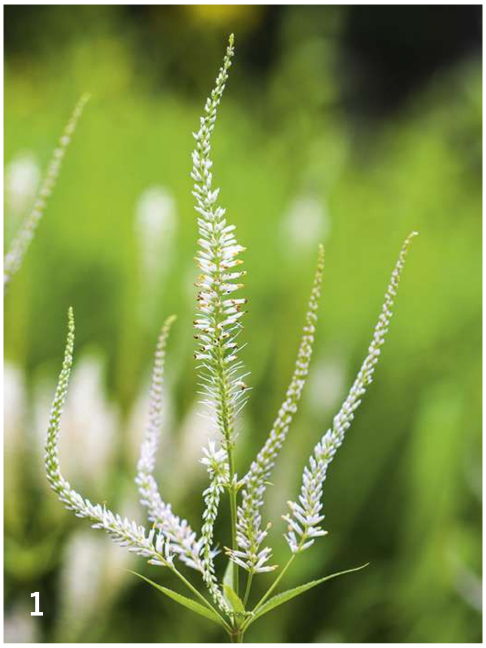
8 *Sanguisorba tenuifolia* var. *alba*
With white, fluffy flowers in early autumn, this burnet combines elegant foliage with robust, upright growth. "It tends to seed about," says James. Sun in moist, fertile soils. 1.2m. RHS H5, USDA 3a-8b.

9 *Miscanthus sinensis* 'Zebrinus'
The subtle variegation of this cultivar adds a light touch to the whole plant. Zebra grass has finger-like flowers in autumn and seedheads that last well into the winter. 2.2m. AGM. RHS H6, USDA 5a-9b.

10 *Silphium laciniatum*
The gopher plant has yellow daisies on tall stems and unique, divided, leathery leaves that look best when backlit by the late afternoon sun. They are a feature until well into winter. 3m. RHS H7, USDA 4a-9b.

11 *Pycnanthemum muticum*
One of the recently popular mountain mints, notable for the long-lived, silvery bracts and spearmint smell. Spreading in sun or light shade on moist, but well-drained soils. 1m. RHS H7, USDA 4a-9b.

12 *Carex muskingumensis*
Very distinctive sedge with gold-edged, light-green, semi-evergreen foliage (in northwest Europe) forming tight clumps. Spreading in sun or light shade on moist soils. 1m. RHS H7, USDA 4a-8b.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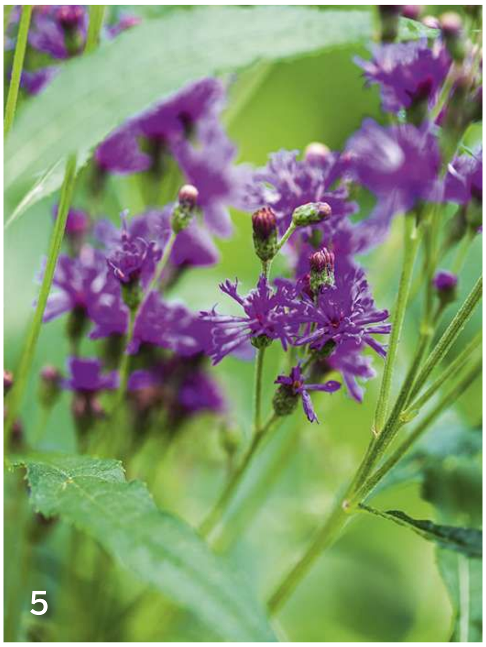
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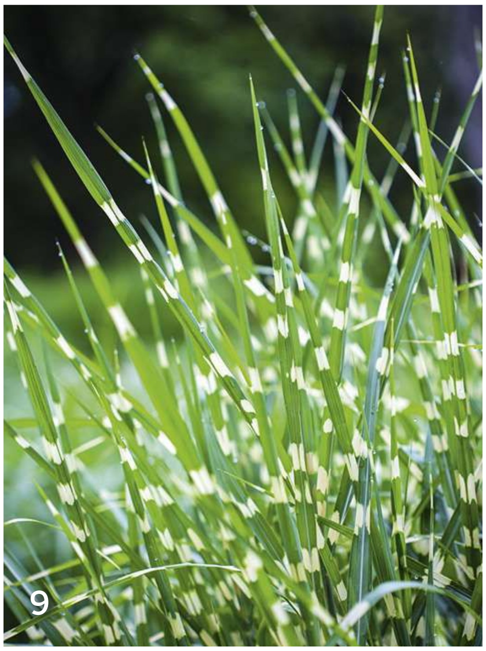
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*HOLDS AN AWARD OF GARDEN MERIT FROM THE ROYAL HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY. †HARDINESS RATINGS GIVEN WHERE AVAILABLE.

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design

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UPDATE COMPILED BY ANNIE GATTI

NEW PARK

Green venue

A 32m-high artificial hill in the Athens suburb of Kallithea not only rewards visitors with spectacular views out to sea and across the city to the Acropolis, but also acts as a green roof for the Stavros Niarchos Cultural Centre. This stylish new home for the Greek National Opera and the National Library of Greece, designed by Renzo Piano, is built into the side of the hill and has at its summit a paper-thin canopy, floating on slender columns and covered with photovoltaic panels, that will generate electricity for the building and shade a glass-walled reading room. The hill is covered by a sloping park that helps to regulate the building's temperature and is open to the public. Landscaped by New York designer Deborah Nevins, the park has been planted with indigenous species, such as rue, boxwood, cistus, lavender and euphorbias. **snfcc.org**

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Exciting New Course, ‘Taste & Scent’, starts Autumn 2016

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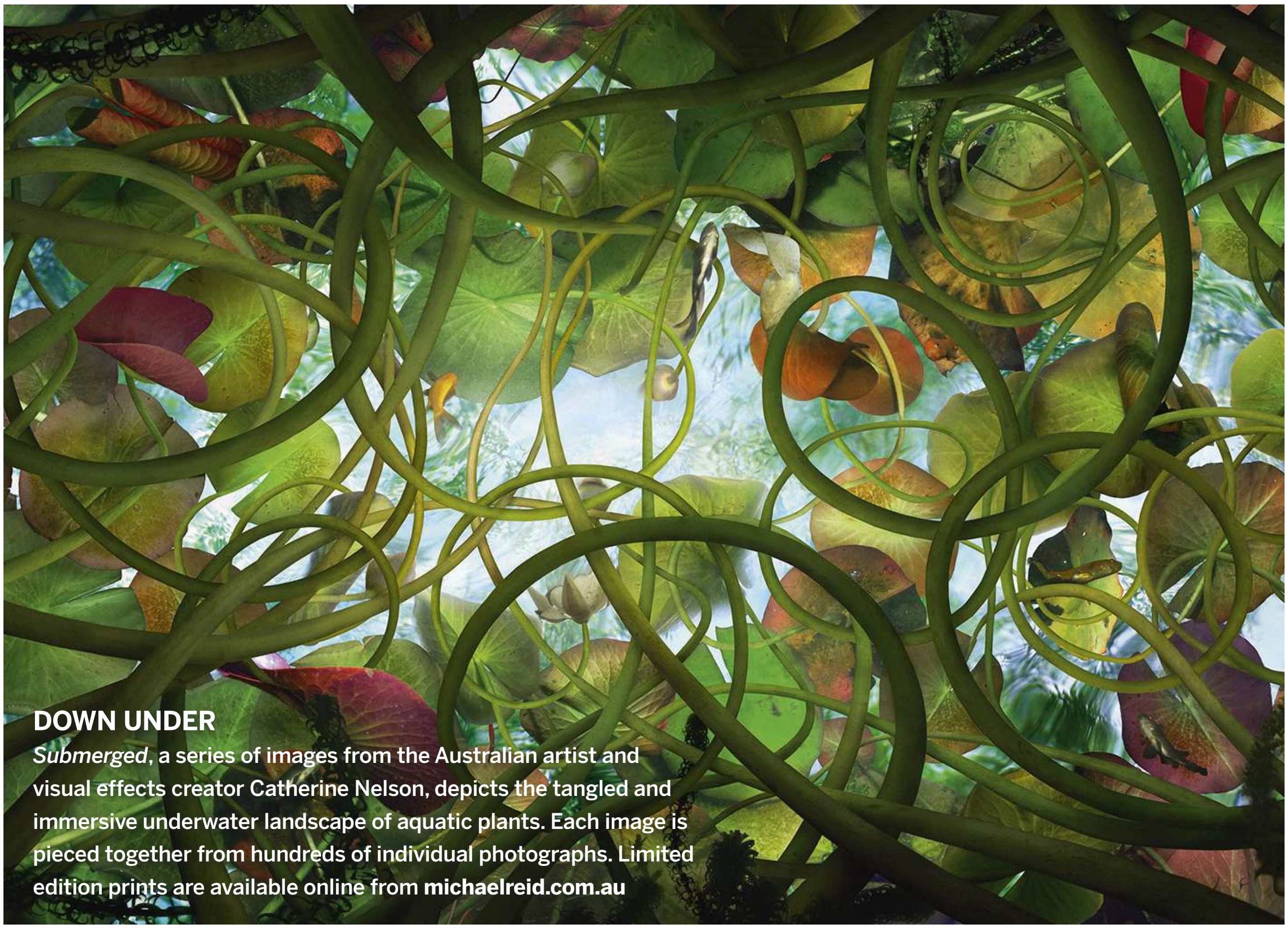
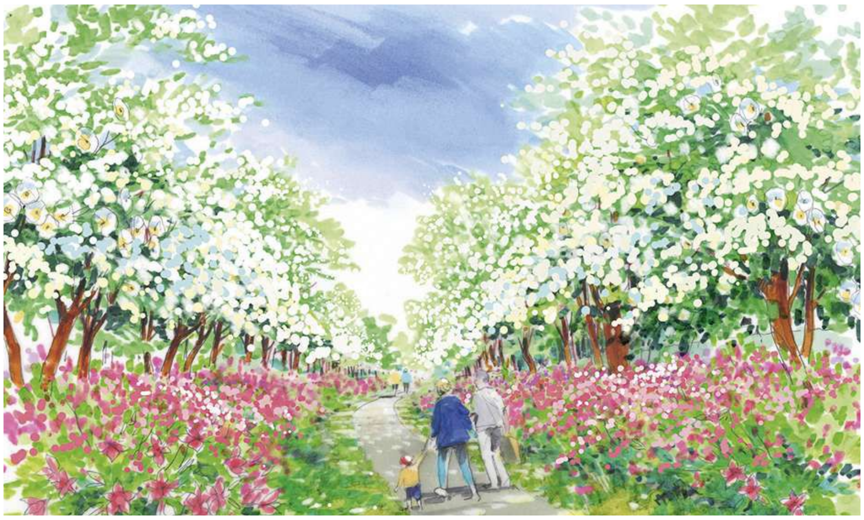


DOWN UNDER

Submerged, a series of images from the Australian artist and visual effects creator Catherine Nelson, depicts the tangled and immersive underwater landscape of aquatic plants. Each image is pieced together from hundreds of individual photographs. Limited edition prints are available online from **michaelreid.com.au**



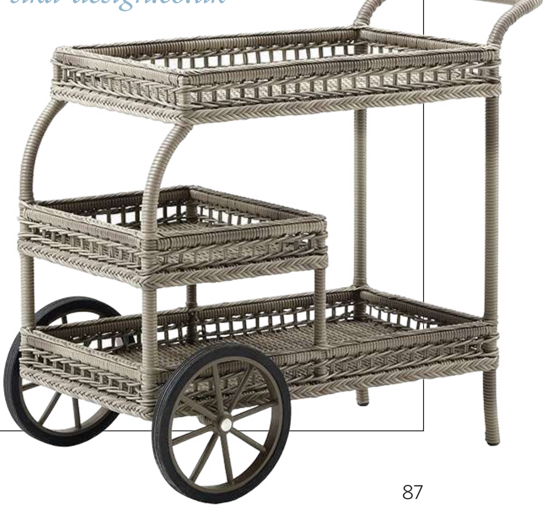
CONSERVATION

Walk back in time

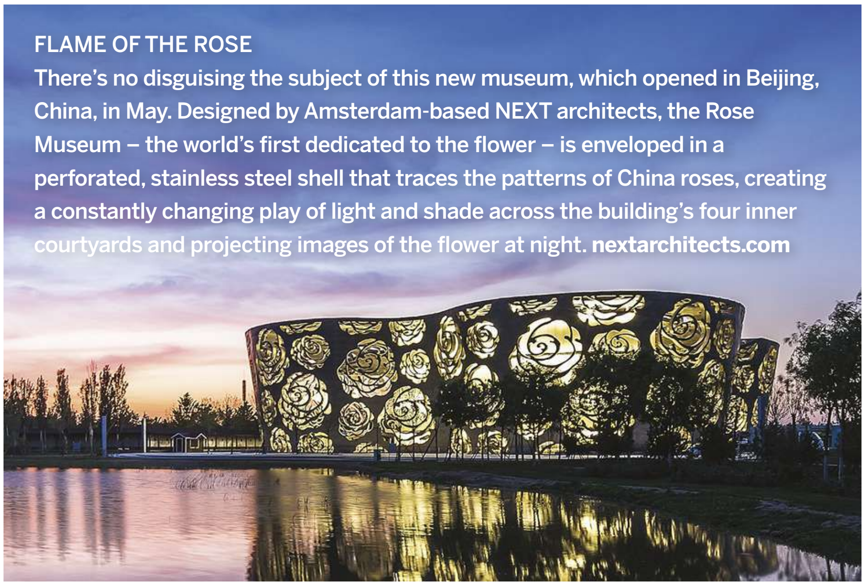
Bodnant Garden in north Wales is renowned for its rhododendrons and is currently restoring its historic avenue of creamy-white *Rhododendron* 'Penjerrick' back to its former floral glory. Reinstating the Penjerrick Walk was the idea of Bodnant's previous head gardener Troy Scott Smith after he came across descriptions of the original avenue, planted in the 1920s with what was at the time a new rhododendron hybrid from Penjerrick Garden in Cornwall. Rhododendrons for the new walk have been micro-propagated at Duchy College, Cornwall, from Bodnant's surviving *R*. 'Penjerrick'. The walk opens to the public next spring, but you can find out more about the project before the opening on a guided walk with current head gardener John Rippin on 14 September. **nationaltrust.org.uk**

MOVEABLE FEAST

This all-weather woven James Trolley, by Danish furniture designers Sika, combines the rustic charm of wicker with the robustness of a synthetic fibre. Available in Antique (pictured) or Vintage White, it costs £575 from Oxley's Furniture. Tel 0800 644 4680, sika-design.co.uk



CATHERINE NELSON, CLIVE McWILLIAM



FLAME OF THE ROSE

There's no disguising the subject of this new museum, which opened in Beijing, China, in May. Designed by Amsterdam-based NEXT architects, the Rose Museum – the world's first dedicated to the flower – is enveloped in a perforated, stainless steel shell that traces the patterns of China roses, creating a constantly changing play of light and shade across the building's four inner courtyards and projecting images of the flower at night. nextarchitects.com

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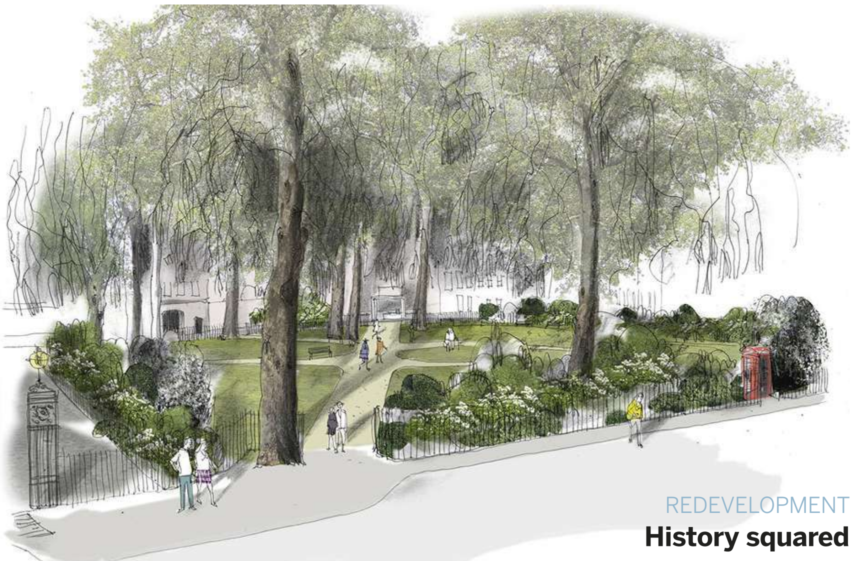
ARTWORK

Gilded cage

A new artwork, *On The Wing*, by Suffolk artist Caroline Wright will be on display in the wildflower meadow at Anglesey Abbey, Cambridgeshire, until October. The golden birdcage was commissioned to mark 50 years since the death of Lord Fairhaven, who designed Anglesey's formal gardens, and celebrates his love of ornithology, while also exploring themes of entrapment and freedom. **nationaltrust.org.uk**



REDEVELOPMENT

History squared

Charterhouse Square in London has been given a fresh new look by the designer and garden historian Todd Longstaffe-Gowan. His design, based on the 18th-century saltire layout, uses native hedging planted around the perimeter and features an octagonal pavilion. It's part of a landmark project entitled Revealing the Charterhouse by London Charterhouse, in partnership with the Museum of London and supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund. The project includes a museum, charting the history of the building, and learning centre designed by Eric Parry Architects. **thecharterhouse.org**

Notebook

- A five-day course on **The Art of Naturalistic Planting** takes place at Cambo Garden, Fife, from 29 August to 2 September, 10am-4pm. Tutors include Cambo head gardener Elliott Forsyth and Noël Kingsbury. £750. Tel 01333 450054, camboestate.com
- Learn how to **use dahlias creatively** at Great Dixter and Perch Hill, East Sussex, on 23 September, with guided tours of both gardens and dinner at Perch Hill. £125. sarahraven.com
- The 17th **Art in the Garden** sculpture exhibition at Sir Harold Hillier Gardens in Hampshire features more than 100 pieces by 47 artists, including the balancing stone, *Revealed In Time*, by Adrian Gray. Until 16 October. 3.hants.gov.uk/hilliergardens.co.uk
- Discover more about the rock gardens made by **James Pulham and Co** in a talk at Waddesdon Manor, Buckinghamshire, by Claude Hitching and Valerie Christman (a descendant of Pulham) on 21 September, 10.30am-3.30pm. £25, including garden tour. waddesdon.org.uk
- A new course of RHS level 2 Certificate in **Principles of Garden Planning, Establishment and Maintenance** starts on 12 October at The Inchbald School of Garden Design, London SW1. The course takes place one day a week over 22 weeks and is led by Andrew Duff. inchbald.co.uk
- Book now for a four-day **Garden Design Masterclass** with designer Annie Guilfoyle, at Chanticleer Garden in Philadelphia, USA. The course is suited to students of garden and landscape design and those who want to re-design their own garden, capturing the essence of Chanticleer. 20-24 October. chanticleergarden.org

XIAO KAIXIONG, NATIONAL TRUST/PHIL MYNOTT, TODD LONGSTAFFE-GOWAN

Imagination and Colour

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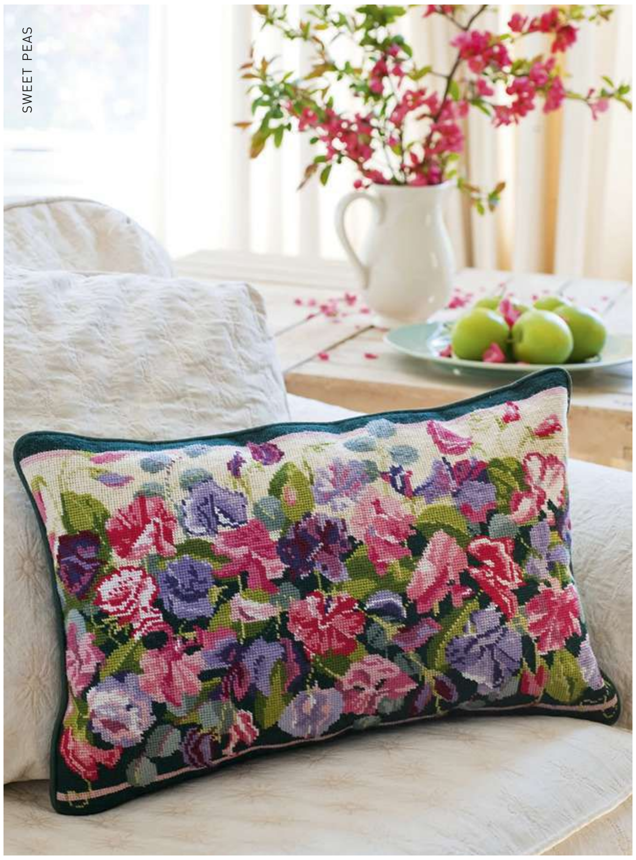
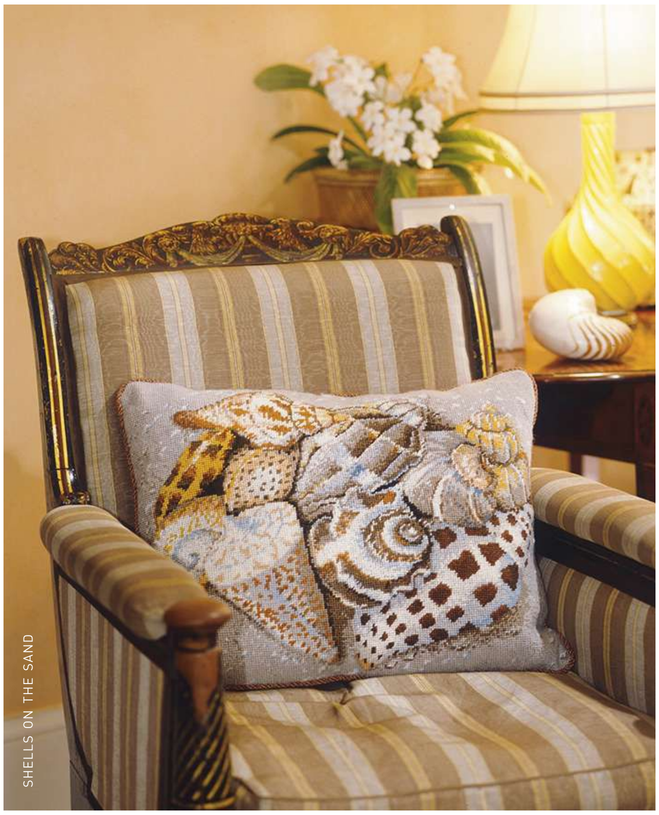
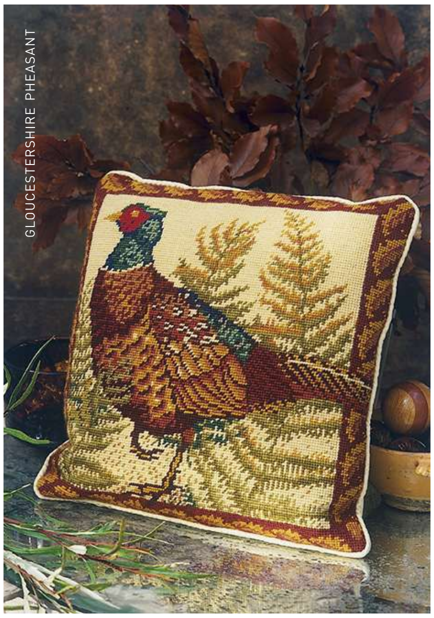

SWEET PEAS


SHELLS ON THE SAND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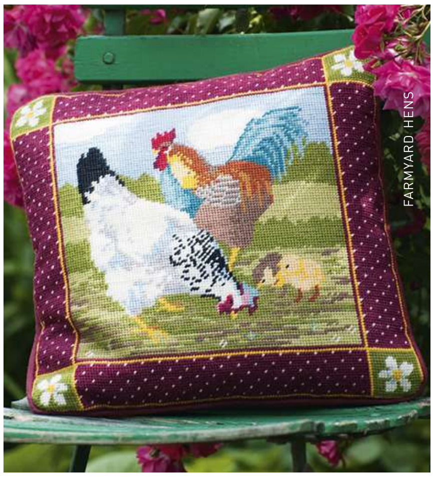
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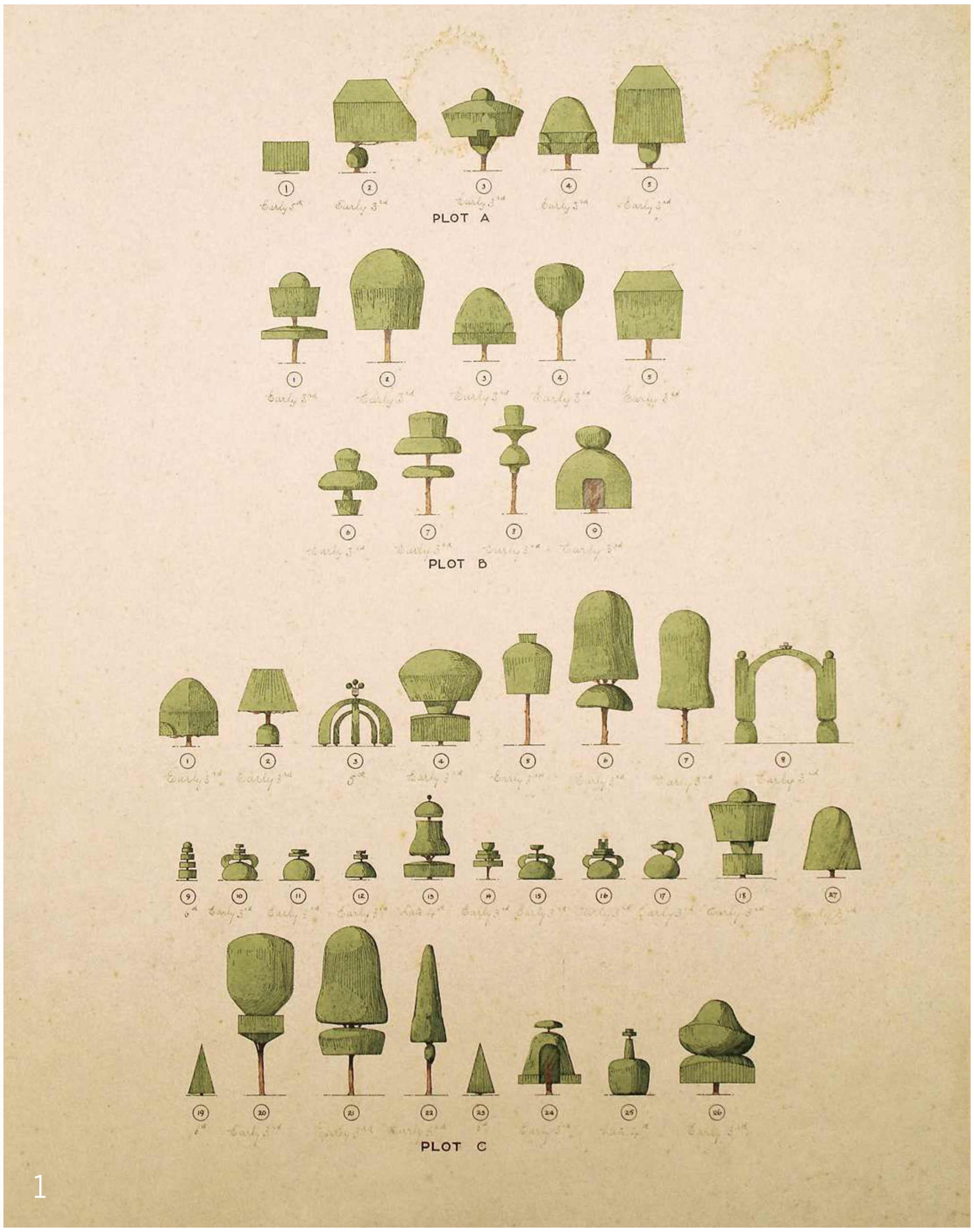


1 Shapes and sizes
One of the most remarkable topiary gardens in Britain is at Levens Hall in Cumbria. The gardens were laid out in the late 17th century by Guillaume Beaumont, one-time gardener to James II. In the mid 1700s, when fashionable landowners were ripping out their formal gardens, this one survived and has steadily become evermore fantastical and extravagant, as this plan, recording just some of the many shapes in the garden in 1927, shows. Today you should look out for chess pieces, a judge's wig, Queen Elizabeth I and a small flock of peacocks.

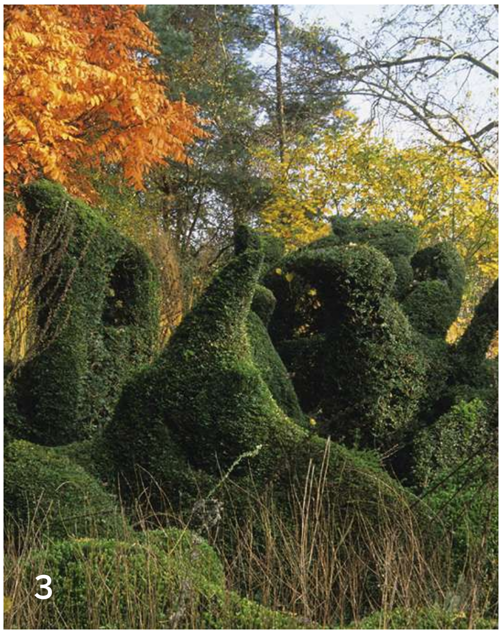
© LEVENS HALL, KENDAL, CUMBRIA

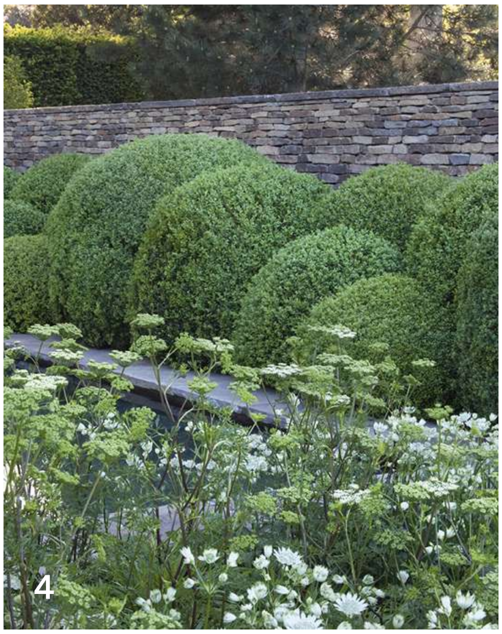
James Alexander-Sinclair is a garden designer, writer, broadcaster and founder of into-gardens.com. He has served on the RHS Council for the past five years.

Battle lines

In the ongoing war between man and nature, topiary is often the gardener's weapon of choice – and one that can be used to frame views, mark entrances or simply to amuse

WORDS JAMES ALEXANDER-SINCLAIR





CAROLE DRAKE / GAP PHOTOS; ROB WHITWORTH / GAP PHOTOS; LYNN KEDDIE / GAP PHOTOS

2 Flights of fancy

I'm not 100 per cent sure what these chaps are – possibly peacocks – but they are particularly remarkable because they're not even faintly formal. The yew hedge at Little Malvern Court, Worcestershire, upon which they sit is clipped but relaxed showing that not all topiary needs to be pitch perfect and follow military lines.

3 Abstract style

This abstract topiary in the fabulous Priona Gardens was inspired by the work of Henry Moore. The Dutch gardens were made by Henk Gerritsen and Anton Schlepers in the 1970s, guided by Mien Ruys's idea of 'wild planting in a strong design'. Gerritsen explained the design principle as: 'What is straight should be curved; what is curved should be straight'.

4 Green sky thinking

This is a beautifully cloud-pruned hedge from Tom Stuart-Smith's garden at the 2010 Chelsea Flower Show. Each billowing box form is clipped so that there is both definition and mingling. Looks simple but is very difficult to achieve effectively. Needs sharp shears and an artist's eye.

Gardening can sometimes be a battle – usually a rather polite and well-behaved one, but still pretty vicious at times. It is a battle between the gardener and nature and most of the time we lose – or, at the very least, are forced into fighting a desperate rearguard action. In some parts of this conflict, however, we are in control and the obvious manifestation of this is in topiary. Man (or woman) imposing his (or her) will upon innocent shrubs and turning them into, well, pretty much anything from razor-edged hedges, crisp-edged obelisks and perfectly balanced spheres to peacocks, pussy cats or vague amorphous masses.

Topiary has a long and ancient tradition. The word itself comes from the Latin *topiarius* meaning landscape gardener – chaps (usually slaves) in tunics running around Lucullan pleasure grounds with shears. The invention of topiary, in Europe at least, is credited to one Cnaeus Matius Calvinus, a mate of Julius Caesar, whose clipped shapes and animals are described by both Pliny and Martial. Needless to say, however, the Chinese and Japanese were way ahead of Europe already with the arts of Penjing and Bonsai respectively.

Many of the great 16th- and 17th-century gardens were stuffed with topiary. Le Nôtre's Versailles was peppered with cones and dolmens of box and yew, and the skills of French topiarists were much in demand. Then topiary fell out of fashion and entered a period of darkness as the likes of Charles Bridgeman and William Kent took over, and all those grand formal gardens were transformed back into considered landscape and rolling hills. Like most things (except, perhaps, fake-fur bomber jackets), fashions always come round again and it was back again in the late 1800s, and more recently taken up with enthusiasm by the Arts and Crafts

▷

5 Block style

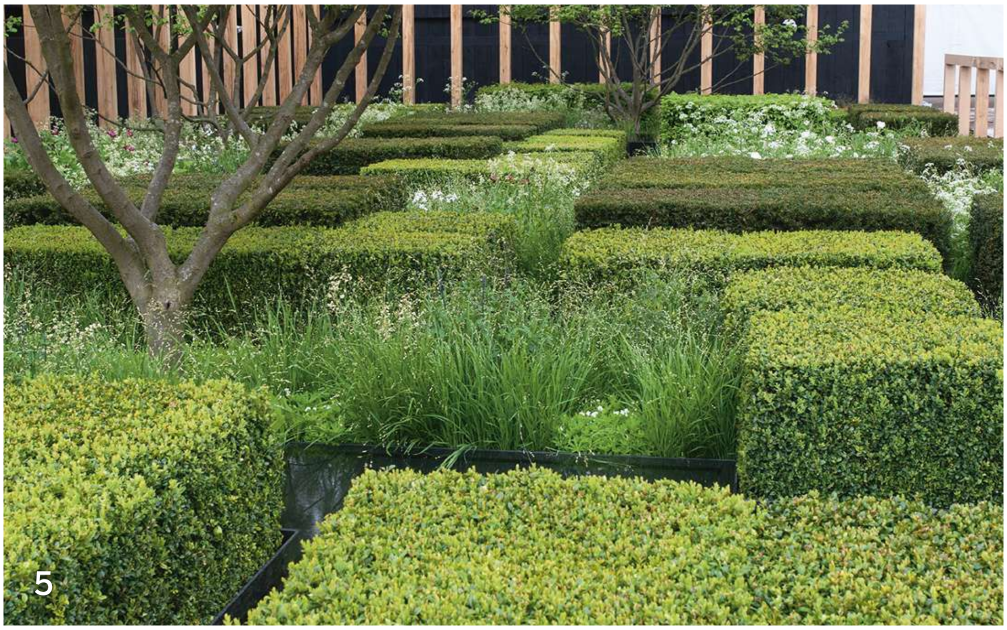
Another Chelsea Flower Show offering – this time from Christopher Bradley-Hole's garden for *The Daily Telegraph* in 2013 – a sensational fusion of English and Japanese design with a drizzle of abstraction. It shows how the beautifully clipped shapes can lift the elegantly gauzy planting within.

6 Park life

Topiary is not just for Europeans. The Francisco Alvardoa Park in Costa Rica has an extraordinary range of strange shapes, such as these quirky arches, and creatures created by Evangelisto Blanco since the 1960s. Most of these are clipped from cypress or juniper and include dinosaurs, monkeys and elephants, and some that could be the love child of any of the above.

7 In the pink

See, I told you that not all topiary had to be green. These are the magnificent clipped azaleas from Villa Carlotta, which is on Lake Como in northern Italy. In April and May there are great joyful waves of colour surfing down from the house to the water. Those of a nervous disposition need not worry, it all reverts to green after flowering.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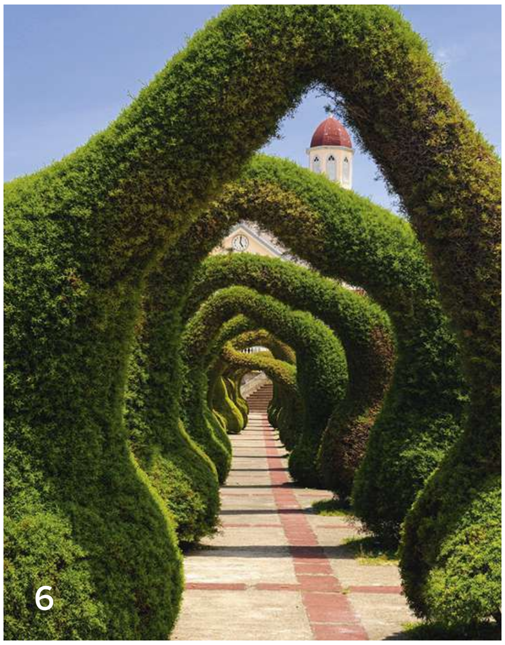
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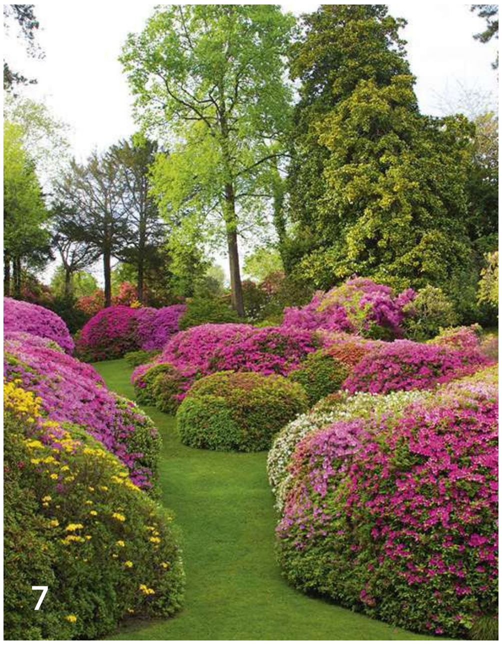
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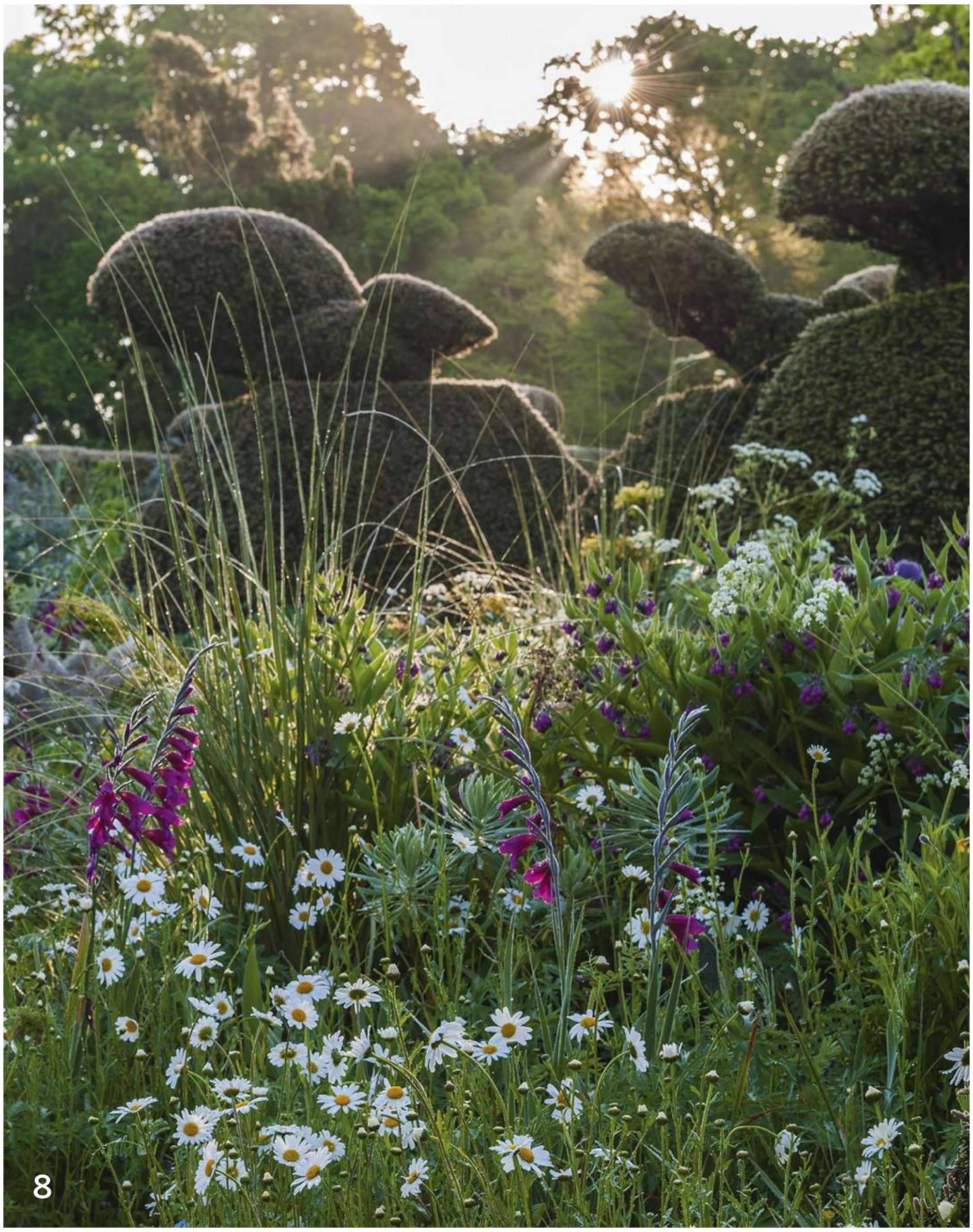
IAN THWAITES / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO; GAERTNER / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO; PETER BARRITT / ROBERT HARDING / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

▷ movement in the late 19th century and early 20th century. In fact the key book on the subject was *Garden Craftsmanship in Yew and Box* by Nathaniel Lloyd who was, of course, Christopher Lloyd's father and the man who brought Edwin Lutyens to Great Dixter.

For today's designer, topiary is still popular as it forms a perfect foil for more naturalistic planting schemes. Nuggets of hedge stand like Spartans, while waves of gesticulating grasses and rampaging perennials crash around them. They add instant architecture to prairie schemes – very necessary as without that they can be a bit spineless and drifting – or can stand alone among perfect lawns or immaculate limestone to give a minimalist feel.

When we think of topiary, the temptation is to think immediately of box or yew, which is unsurprising as they are both corking plants for the purpose. However, they are not alone and I have seen other shrubs used in remarkable ways. One thing that has seen a massive rise in popularity is the multi-stemmed tree or shrub. This may not seem to be topiary by the purist but it achieves a similar effect in that it can anchor floaty planting but with the added dimension of being semi-transparent so that you can catch glimpses of the planting beyond or beneath. Tom Stuart-Smith's divine *Viburnum rhytidophyllum* springs to mind: you may remember it as a line of majestically cloud-pruned shrubs set against Corten steel walls in his gold medal-winning 2006 Chelsea garden. Angus White, who owns Architectural Plants (a wonderful nursery in West Sussex, which you should all visit) has a section in his catalogue of plants 'that can have architecture thrust upon them', which includes a number of rather unexpected candidates such as *Magnolia grandiflora*, *Eriobotrya*, *Lithocarpus* and *Phillyrea latifolia*. These last are particularly useful



JOHN GLOVER / GAP PHOTOS

8 Friends with benefits

In the (slightly adulterated) words of James Taylor: 'When you're down and troubled, and you need some lovin' care…' then you should really go to Great Dixter, East Sussex, as it will always provide you not only with a lift but also a bit of inspiration. These are just some of the many outstanding bits of topiary that adorn both gardens and meadows.

Useful information

- **Architectural Plants**
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  Pulborough, West Sussex
  RH20 1DJ.
  Tel 01798 879213,
  architecturalplants.com

Further reading

The Art of Creative Pruning: Inventive Ideas for Training and Shaping Trees and Shrubs by Jake Hobson (Timber Press, 2011).

Topiary by Jenny Hendy (Southwater, 2008).

Topiary and the Art of Training Plants by David Joyce (Frances Lincoln, 1999).

for practising the Japanese art of *niwaki* or cloud pruning where the tree is manipulated into a shape that contains the distilled essence of the tree but more concentrated – a bit like the relationship between blackcurrants and Ribena.

To take the idea of topiary off into a different (and perhaps less conventionally tasteful) direction then you could try the method championed by Walt Disney where plants are grown around wire frames; it's tricky to sculpt a giant Donald Duck from traditional shrubs. It's then possible to use pretty much anything as topiary from flowering climbers to ferns and low-growing perennials.

In short, the world would be a lesser place without topiary. It serves many purposes: to mark entrances, to create barriers, to frame views, to commemorate, to celebrate, to disguise or accentuate architectural eccentricities and, of course, to amuse. ☐

Places to visit

Wightwick Manor, near Wolverhampton, is a National Trust property in the Arts and Crafts style – it is neo-Tudor with a mock medieval great hall – and is much better than it sounds. The gardens were laid out as a series of hedged compartments in about 1887 by Alfred Parsons. The topiaries were augmented in the early 20th century by Thomas Mawson. Look out for the Poets' Garden, which was started from cuttings donated by Shelley, Tennyson, Dickens and William Morris. **nationaltrust.org.uk/wightwick-manor-and-gardens**

To see one of the largest, craziest crosses between a hedge and a bit of topiary, you need to go to **Powis Castle** in Powys. The vast yews were planted in the 1720s and take a gardener in a cherry picker ten weeks to cut. **nationaltrust.org.uk/powis-castle-and-garden**

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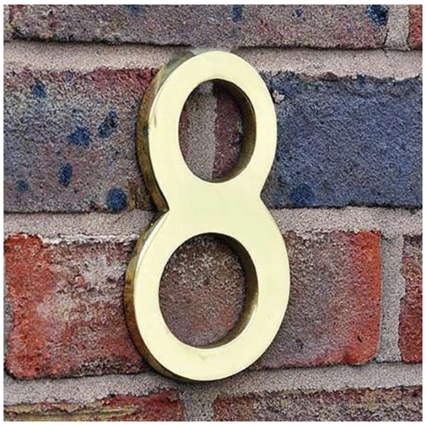

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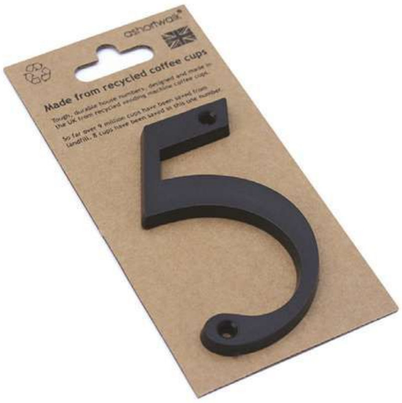

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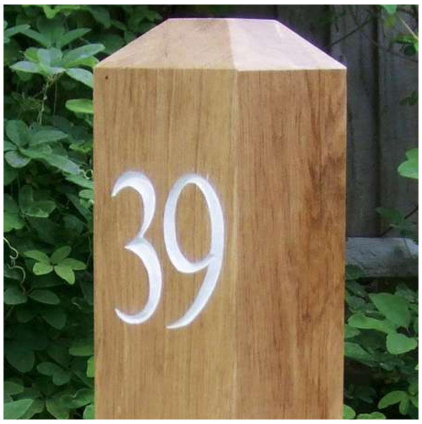

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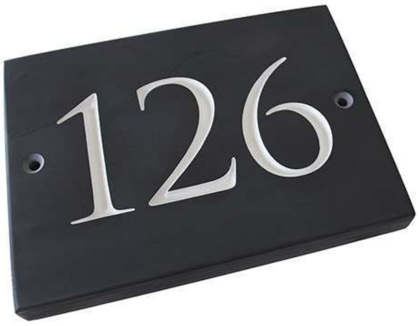

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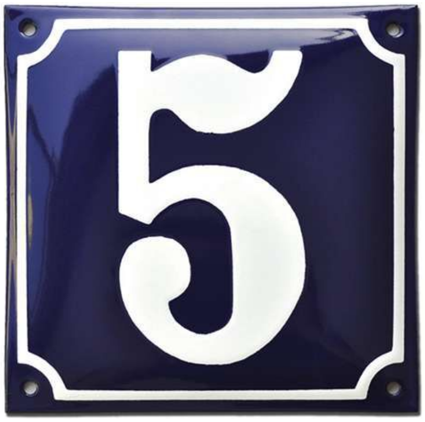

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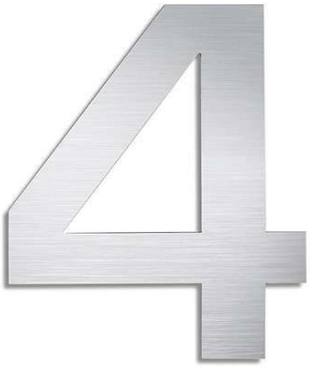

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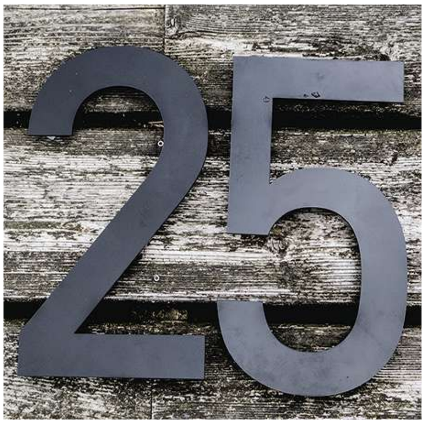

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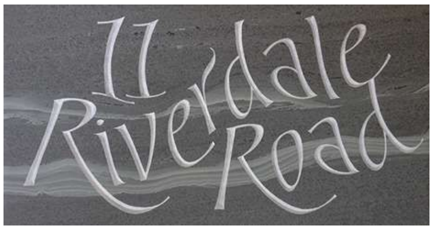

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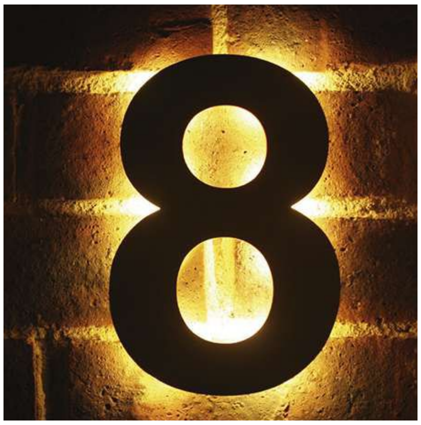

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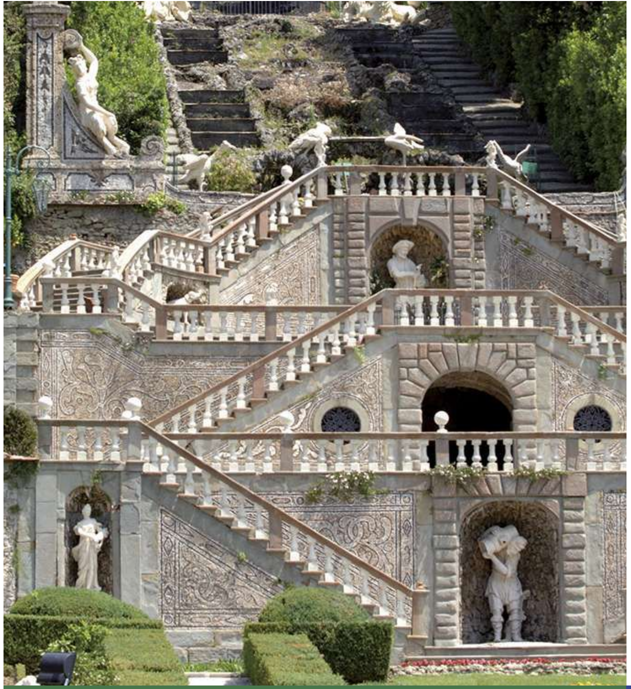

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The client's brief was to update the garden design and introduce more interest into the main garden space by using different levels, rendered walls and new low maintenance planting, whilst retaining the feeling of openness.

Before:

The majority of the garden was laid with ageing artificial turf. The wooden deck, steps and the fences were rotting away and needed to be replaced. Two of the fences were covered with ivy, which the client didn't really like, however they did appreciate the way it softened the boundary's appearance. They wanted to replace the collapsing fencing and to have some new climbers, although as the garden is quite small, they didn't want to feel too enclosed.

What was done:

The old rotting wooden deck and steps were removed and replaced with natural stone. All three fences were replaced with Jacksons Horizontal Hit and Miss fencing, which works well in the space because it provides privacy, but the gaps between the boards allow some light and air through, so it still feels open and not restrictive, and there's the added benefit of Jacksons Fencing being guaranteed against rot and insect attack for 25 years, so it will be looking great for many years.

New climbers have been planted to reduce any starkness as their foliage and flowers soften the lines perfectly. In the area around the raised seating, the fence has been clad with Jacksons Venetian panels, so this keeps up the horizontal motif and defines the seating area as a distinct space within the garden.

Conclusion:

The clients are delighted with their new garden, and are looking forward to seeing it mature over the next few years. An interesting footnote to the story is that at first the neighbours were unsure about whether to agree to the fence change and wanted the ivy left in place on their side. However, once they saw the new Jacksons fences they were delighted and have removed all the ivy and developed a new flowerbed in its place.

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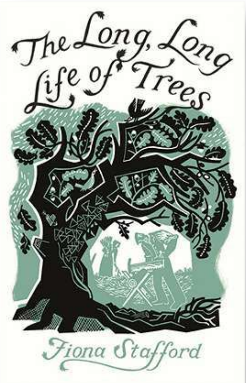
Book reviews



THE LONG, LONG LIFE OF TREES

by Fiona Stafford

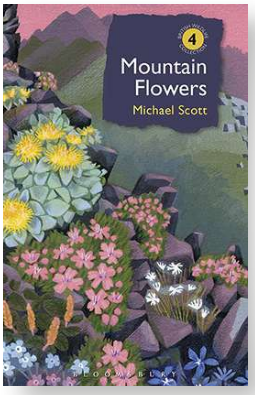
Yale University Press, £16.99
ISBN 978-0300207330

An often lyrical and in-depth exploration of the impact 17 of our most common trees have had on our culture and lives.

Reviewer Lia Leendertz is a garden writer and allotmenteer.

This is a book that instantly enriches your experience of the natural world, overlaying the trees around you in myth, poetry and hidden meaning. The author Fiona Stafford – professor of English language and literature at the University of Oxford, and presenter of two Radio 3 series on *The Meaning of Trees* – has chosen 17 of the most common trees and here presents an incredibly thorough and engaging exploration of each. To take just one example, for the Rowan chapter we start in the suburbs, where neat rowan trees are often bought as inoffensive trees for smaller gardens, but quickly move to wild mountainsides where lone and wildly twisted rowans cling to rocks. We then take in their descriptions by poets Iain Crichton Smith and Seamus Heaney ('like a lip-sticked girl'), meanings and derivatives of rowan and of its other name, quickbeam, and relevant stories from Celtic and Viking mythology, plus its association with witchcraft and protection. Then there's the botanical classification, the Danish and Polish traditional uses for the berries, and the forlorn rowan trees that were once planted for protection outside Highland cottages, still thriving, and producing crops of berries as the cottages themselves stand abandoned following the Highland Clearances.

The book is peppered with useful illustrations – from Hokusai's paintings of Japanese cherry blossom to Charles II under the Boscobel Oak – all of which help underline the way these trees are woven into our lives and our culture. The abundance of information never feels like a deluge, as Stafford leads the reader through it with a light, entertaining and often poetic touch. This is a real treasure of a book, which has clearly sprung from a great many years of observation of and fascination with trees.



MOUNTAIN FLOWERS

by Michael Scott

Bloomsbury, £35
ISBN 978-1472929822

An enticing guide to exploring Britain's elusive mountain flora and of the wild places where it can be found.

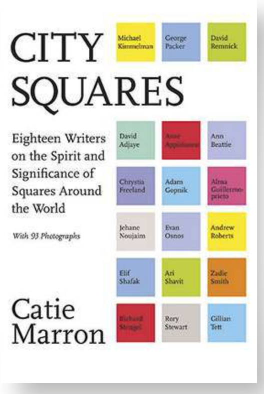
Reviewer Noël Kingsbury is a writer and plantsman.

Someone from central Europe might look askance at Britain's 'mountains', declare them to be no more than hills, and at our high-altitude flora, comparing it unfavourably to their own drifts of gentians and edelweiss. That rather misses the point, as British hills are so much further north that their peaks bring them into a sub-arctic zone. Much of our (limited) mountain flora is sub-arctic in origin, a survivor of the advance guard of plant life that reconquered land left barren by the last Ice Age. It also includes some plants more typical of central European mountains, however, which makes it particularly interesting.

Part of a series of books clearly modelled on the highly collectable *New Naturalist* series, but somewhat better designed and better illustrated, *Mountain Flowers* is a superb introduction to these elusive but tenacious plants. After giving us an overview of the origins of our mountain flora, the author summarises the main high-altitude regions where these plants can be found, and describes the plants themselves. Many populations survive as tiny groups in inaccessible places or highly vulnerable environments. This is one area, where it seems, the determined hill-walker-cum-botanist may make significant discoveries. The book concludes with a discussion of the various challenges our mountain flora faces, chiefly climate change and overgrazing. The latter is a particular issue, as high stock levels of sheep and deer have had a devastating impact on much of our mountain and hill regions.

This book wonderfully conveys the feeling that looking for alpine plants is one of the most exciting of all of the forays we can make into exploring Britain's wild plants; a great guide for the hill walker but also a great read for the armchair traveller.

Book reviews


CITY SQUARES
Eighteen Writers on the Spirit and Significance of Squares Around the World
With 93 Photographs
Catie Marron

CITY SQUARES

by Catie Marron

Harper Collins, £20
ISBN 978-0062380203

A collection of essays charting the sometimes tumultuous and incredibly diverse life of city squares – a microcosm of civic sentiment.

Reviewer Todd Longstaff-Gowan is the author of The London Square.

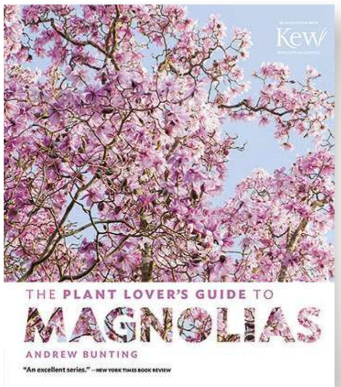
Squares have been very much in the news over the past few decades, and most often as the settings for political unrest. Tahrir, Tiananmen and Taksim conjure scenes of social turmoil that have sparked cathartic transformations. Their association with social upheaval reflects their longstanding role as places for public assembly and vibrant arenas of interaction.

City Squares conveys clearly the complexity and appeal of an ancient urban phenomenon. It's an anthology of 18 essays commissioned from leading contemporary figures from the worlds of politics, journalism, architecture and academia – from David Adjaye to Michael Kimmelman and Zadie Smith – where the contributors explore what squares mean to them, including both personal recollections and broader socio-historical overviews.

These are divided under three headings – culture, politics and history – each of which is preceded by an introductory essay that sets the scene.

Conceived and edited by Catie Marron, chairman of the board of directors of Friends of the High Line, the book reminds us that squares derive in part from the Greek *Agora* and the Roman *Forum*, and although they have developed in diverse and often eccentric ways, they remain essentially civic spaces.

It is, therefore, a great irony that although conceived for democratic discourse, squares have long been popular with authoritarian regimes – many charmless, menacing and arid plazas come to mind. Anyone who has any experience of large public assemblies will know they are unpredictable and potentially volatile. It is in fact for this reason that London's residential squares were contrived with a view to discouraging public assembly and public access. It's a very English response to an old problem, where trees and shrubs displace incipient insurgents.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ANDREW BUNTING
"An excellent series." —NEW YORK TIMES BOOK REVIEW

THE PLANT LOVER'S GUIDE TO MAGNOLIAS

by Andrew Bunting

Timber Press, £17.99
ISBN 978-1604695786

The latest in this excellent series of well-illustrated guides to popular plants features one of the UK's favourite garden trees.

Reviewer Rory Dusoir is a Kew-trained gardener and writer.

Andrew Bunting has spent a lifetime studying and discussing magnolias and this book offers an eye-catching distillation of his knowledge, laced with plenty of enthusiasm. Although he has travelled widely, he is based in the USA, which is a distinct advantage as the wide variety of climates allows a very broad range of magnolias to be grown there, and their hardiness thoroughly tested.

Most of the book is given over to a compendium of 146 species and cultivars. However, there are also chapters that provide an outline of the genus from garden design and botanical perspectives. Bunting is able to speak authoritatively about which are the best yellow-flowered magnolias, or the best cultivars of *Magnolia* x *loebneri*, for instance, but he also encourages us to explore beyond the more familiar deciduous subjects.

There are helpful lists of magnolias to suit different purposes, so that it should be quite easy to find a magnolia for almost any situation.

Readers may be surprised to discover the broad variety that it is possible to grow in the UK: there are lists 'for small spaces', 'with tropical foliage', 'with attractive fruit' and magnolias 'for hedges or screening'. The prospect of creating a hedge of the glossy, neat, evergreen and profusely flowering *Magnolia laevifolia* is a mouth-watering one; perhaps its slow growth-rate precludes the general adoption of this idea.

To gain a thorough understanding of a decent-sized genus of trees is the work of a lifetime, such is the scale of the subjects, and their lifespan. Very few of us can hope to gain a comprehensive oversight of such a genus on our own account; therefore it is appreciated when those who have are able to communicate their knowledge to the gardening public.

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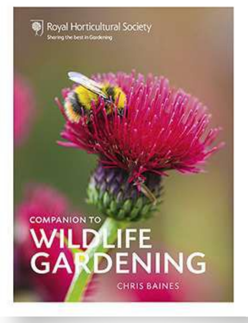


RHS COMPANION TO WILDLIFE GARDENING
by Chris Baines

Frances Lincoln, £25
ISBN 978-0711237919

This revision of a classic is ideal for anyone interested in current thinking on the subject or who would like to create a wildlife garden.

Reviewer Matthew Biggs is a garden writer and plantsman.

Gardening for wildlife is now such a major consideration, it is surprising to recall that Chris Baines created the first Wildlife Garden at Chelsea, as recently as 1985, the same year that his *How to Make a Wildlife Garden*, one of the first books to be written on the subject, was published. This is that classic book, updated and revised.

The authoritative, informative, yet friendly text (it is easy to imagine you are chatting to Chris in his garden) is based on years of his own research, observation and diverse practical experience, combined with the 'best practice' currently implemented at RHS gardens.

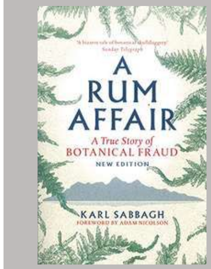
There are ideas for habitat creation whatever your available space, from window-box to garden and roof, and extensive lists of plants for creating a range of habitats in all parts of the garden. New and established ideas for attracting wildlife, some controversial, such as the use of pesticides, and provision of bird tables, are clearly discussed and explained. The book, in four parts, is further divided into subsections, making information easy to assimilate.

Exquisite images, a highlight of the book, are a combination of those showing nature's glory in the diverse range of flora and fauna that would happily find a home in your garden given the correct habitat, and practical images that complement the text. Gripes are minor: the plant list for Garden Border Flowers for Nectar and Seed lacks the seasonal divisions necessary as guidance for novices and the list of seed and plant suppliers could be more comprehensive.

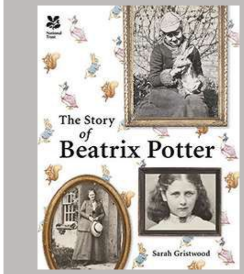
It's practical yet beautifully presented, a pleasure to dip into or to read from cover to cover, but its greatest value is that it is inspirational and relevant to every 21st-century gardener who cares about wildlife.

Other books

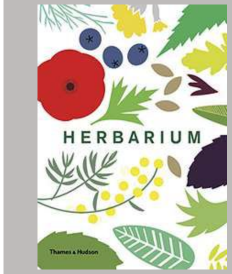
More new books to help you save water in the garden, grow the best herbs and learn to look at the landscape a little differently



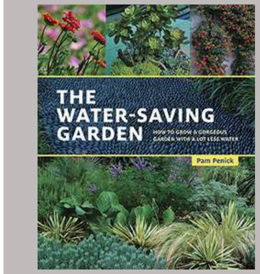
A RUM AFFAIR: THE TRUE STORY OF BOTANICAL FRAUD
by Karl Sabbagh
Birlinn Limited, £9.99
ISBN 978-1780273860
How in the 1940s a tenacious amateur botanist uncovered botanical fraud on the Isle of Rum.



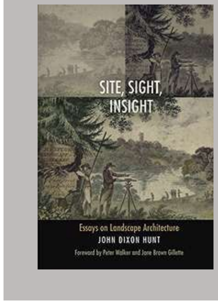
THE STORY OF BEATRIX POTTER
by Sarah Gristwood
National Trust Books, £16.99
ISBN 978-1909881808
The surprising life of the Cumbrian farmer, conservationist, artist and much-loved children's author 150 years on from her birth.



HERBARIUM
by Caz Hildebrand
Thames & Hudson, £16.95
ISBN 978-0500518939
A beautifully illustrated guide to 100 essential herbs, with information on how to grow them, cook with them and exploit their healing properties.

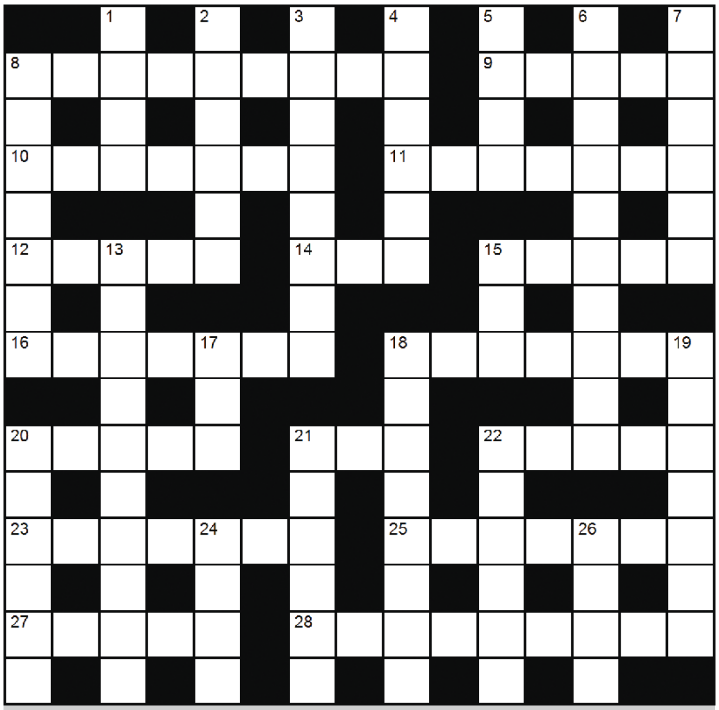


THE WATER-SAVING GARDEN
by Pam Penick
Ten Speed Press, £16.95
ISBN 978-16077479322
A book full of inspiring designs and techniques to help you create an outdoor space that looks fabulous without costing the earth.



SITE, SIGHT, INSIGHT: ESSAYS ON LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE
by John Dixon Hunt
University of Pennsylvania Press, £36
ISBN 978-0812248005
Twelve essays that look at our understanding of landscape.

Crossword



ACROSS

8 Flower of borage family – a third loo, possibly! (9)

9 Like a crumbly, nutritious soil left in Mayo, perhaps (5)

10 *Digitalis* series legendary kingdom? (7)

11 Genus of scabious-like plants – UK ain't a variation! (7)

12 Wild apples found in the sea? (5)

14/21 Container that improves root growth right inside patio arrangement (3,3)

15 Novel name for an otter – and a violet agapanthus (5)

16 Alternative piece to a carnation variety (7)

18/17 down Voyeur's name for a vivid yellow narcissus (7,3)

20 Colour of *Sesleria autumnalis* flowers… very best (5)

21 See 14 across

22 Arrive outside Barnsdale's first wooded valley (5)

23 Small thorn right inside preserved food (7)

25 Annoyed, as a juniper tree is? (7)

27 A Batavia lettuce cultivar, slow to bolt – pass it on! (5)

28 Insect larva that damages plants – if near elm, oddly (4,5)

DOWN

1 Orange-red, dwarf gladioli… in tomato maincrop (4)

2 See 13 down

3 Threadlike root of honey fungus found in Doc Martens? (8)

4 Fungal disease of trees taking top off bracken, perhaps (6)

5 Remove fig from untidy foliage for olive genus (4)

6 Plant of *Tropaeolum* genus creates autumn stir (10)

7 Canary circling genus of cardoon and globe artichoke (6)

8 Type of *Hydrangea* – place loosely around extremes of cosmea (7)

13/2 Genus of 'Lady's mantle' (10,6)

15 Part of foot – last third of white-berried parasitic plant (3)

17 See 18 across

18 Peanut is turned into colourful annuals! (8)

19 Rose follows this for a viburnum (7)

20 Thorny shrubs with edible flower-buds – sort of hops? (6)

21 Fragrant, pale-yellow narcissus for a native American settlement (6)

22 Genus of 'spider flower' – sort of welcome when head removed (6)

24 Winged tree-fruits – essential at start of summer (4)

26 Heather's alternative name for *Calluna vulgaris* (4)

SOLUTIONS TO THIS MONTH'S CROSSWORD WILL BE PRINTED NEXT MONTH

AUGUST'S SOLUTION

ACROSS 1 Ageratum **6** Stools **9** Tatsoi **10** Galtonia **11** Herb **12** Tansy **13** Down **15** Darmera **16** Sucker **18** Corymb **20** Ricinus **22** Beer **24** Gumbo **25** Sods **27** Flamingo **29** Sprout **30** Angora **31** Sea aster.

DOWN 2 Glade **3** Raspberry **4** Thistle **5** Magenta **6** Sollyas **7** Ovoid **8** Lei **14** Weeds **15** Drone **17** Cynosurus **19** Begonia **20** Ramsons **21** Choisya **23** Romeo **26** Drupe **28** Lyn.

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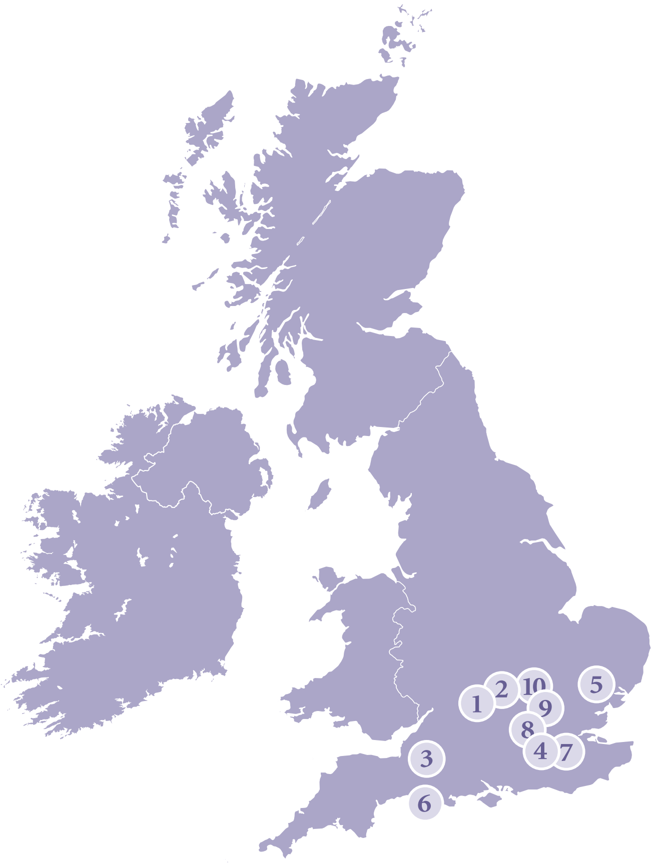

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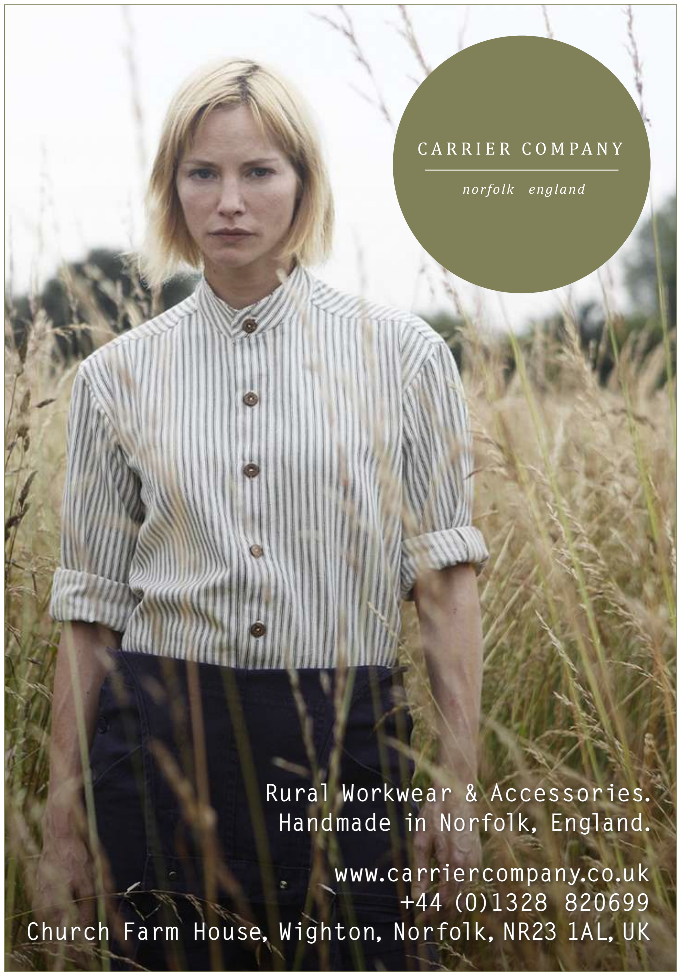

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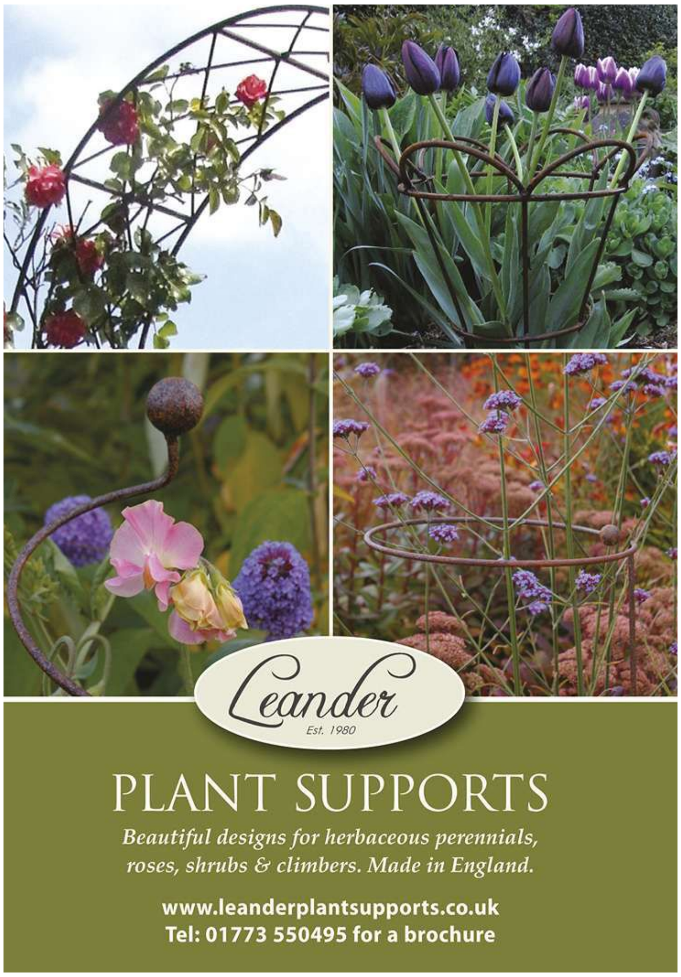

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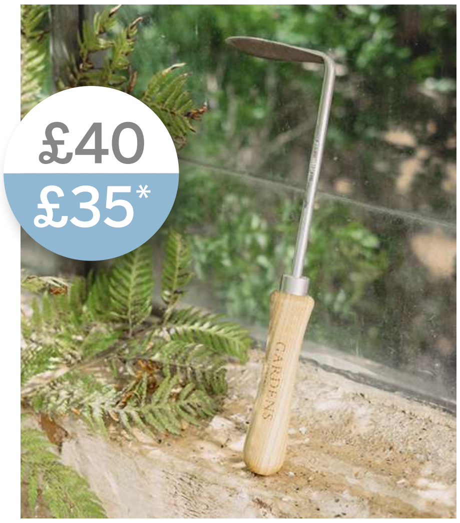

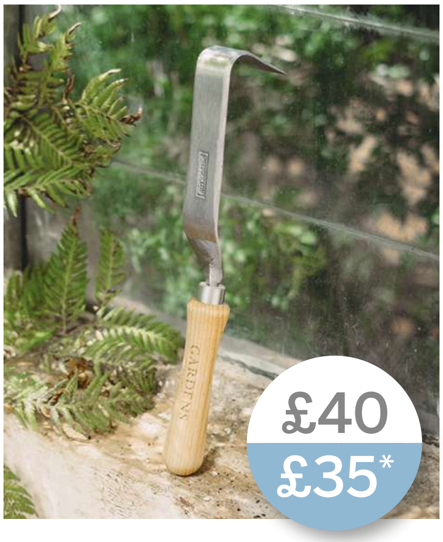

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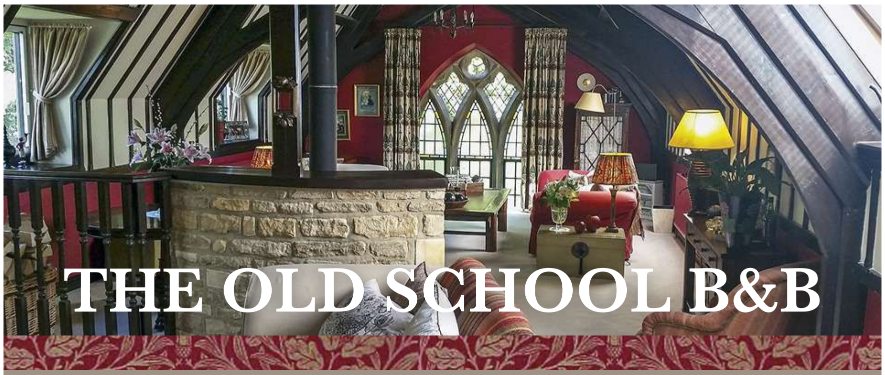

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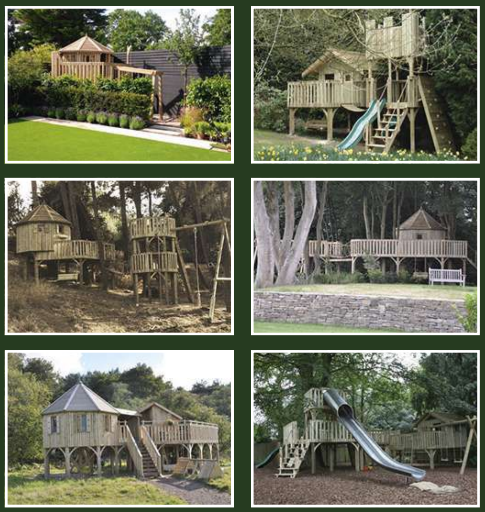

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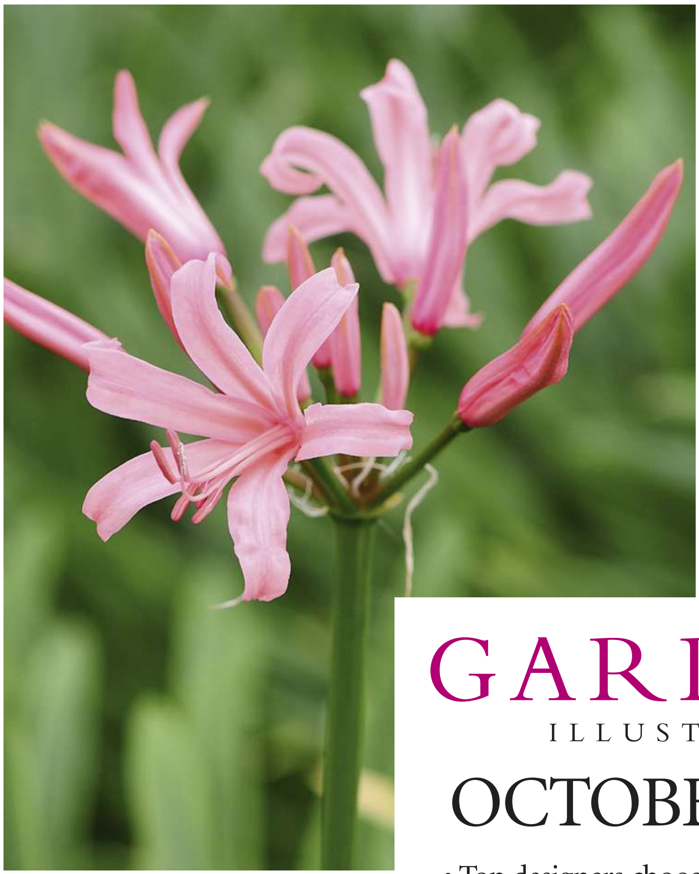

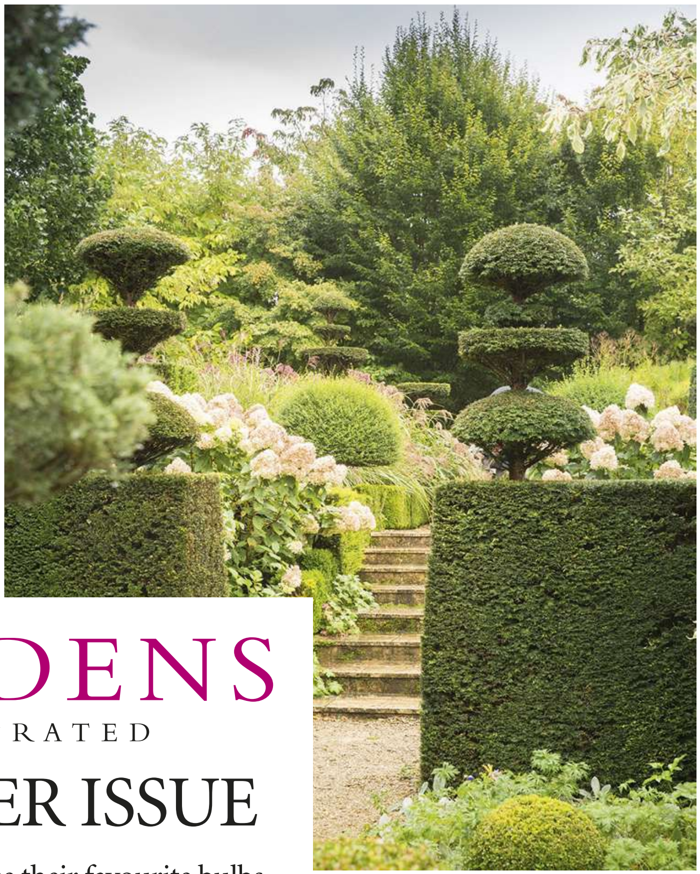

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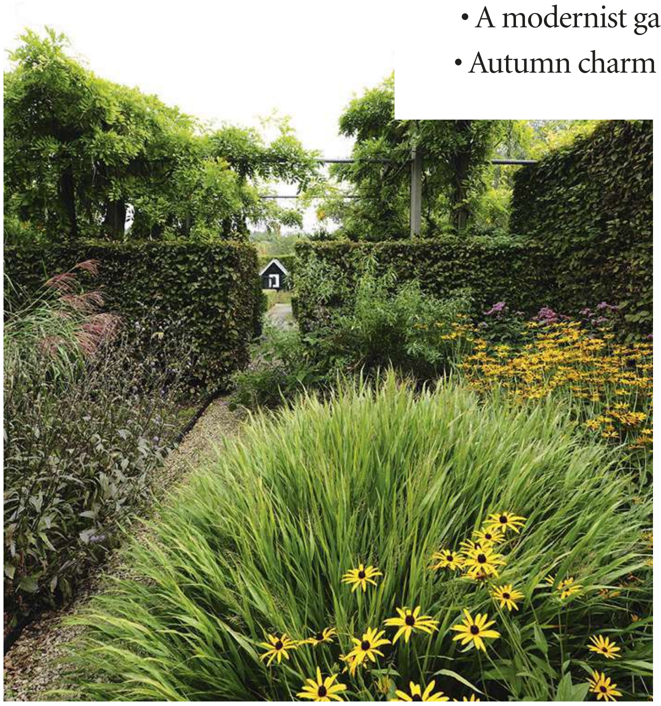

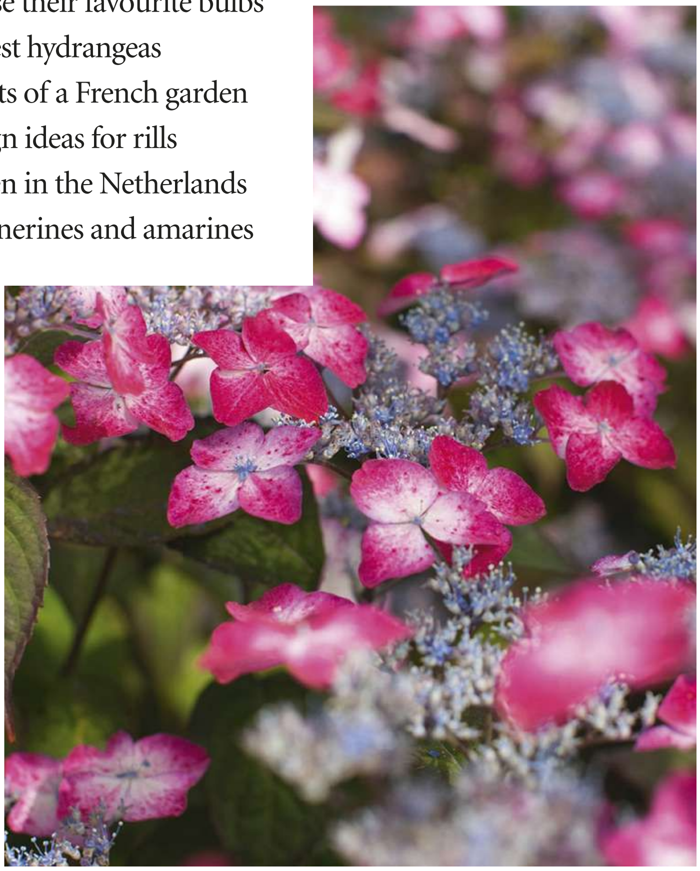

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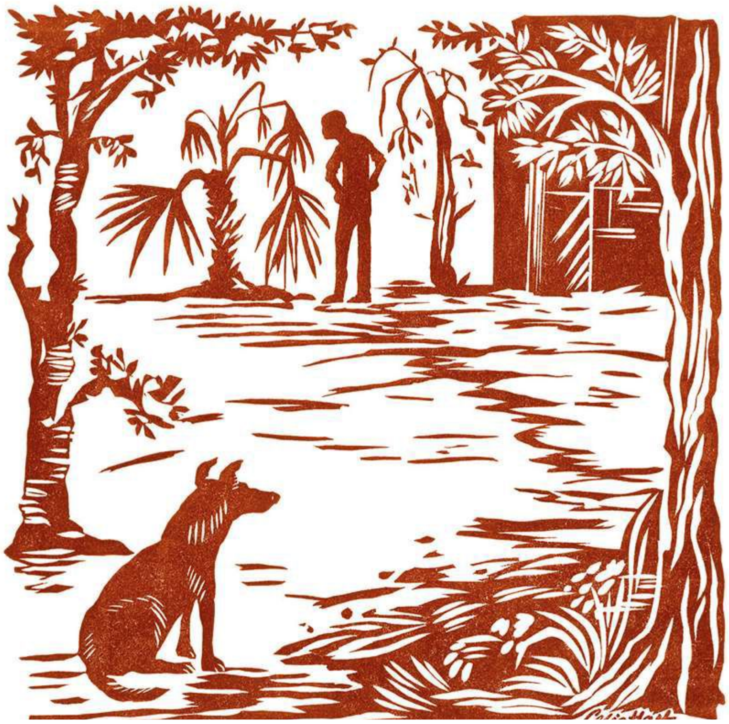
There will be blood

Frank's beloved bismarckia has been destroyed and someone has to pay

WORDS **FRANK RONAN** ILLUSTRATION **CELIA HART**



Still, we thought, how much harm can a small burrowing animal do?

In the beginning my feelings towards gophers were innocently benign. It was an instinct that was reinforced by the neighbour who offered to have ours poisoned while her own were being done. That her garden was three parts concrete, and that men in space suits appeared regularly to spray the concrete with chemicals unknown, had not left me sympathetic to her gardening style, and I politely declined (one should always err towards politeness with neighbours, and I am holding back here on the slim risk that she might come across this in the dentist's waiting room), saying that we had a dog and I couldn't put her in the way of accidental poisoning, which was true, though only a part of it.

We were aware, nonetheless, that gophers might not be entirely to the garden's advantage, and seized instead upon the offer of an owl box and a pair of rescued barn owls from the local raptor sanctuary. The best site for the box was in an oak tree overlooking that neighbour's garden, and the reaction to its erection was somewhat disdainful. Disdain turned to smugness when the owls, at the first opportunity, took their gopher-hunting skills elsewhere and were never seen again.

Still, we thought, how much harm can a small burrowing animal do? We have no lawns for them to disfigure, and not much in the way of herbaceous stuff for them to damage either. The occasional sudden and mysterious death was blamed on the drought, or on my own incompetence at planting in new circumstances. Then the bougainvillea went. It was a large, old plant on a corner of the house, constantly in flower (and the proper, old-fashioned colour too) and the sort of garden asset you wouldn't want to lose. One day it was as happy as Larry and the next as dead as a dodo.

Of course there were gopher mounds: crescent-shaped eruptions in the soil that gave the game away. We had seen them before the crime without alarm. We were used to moles and other amateur vermin, and supposed that whatever lived beneath the ground might be trimming a juicy root or two, never imagining that wholesale vandalism was on the agenda. What sort of animal, apart from the human sort, would destroy whole plants, whole ecosystems, for a bite of lunch?

Frank Ronan is a novelist who gardens in both the UK and USA.

Still numb from the attack, and without having had time to do anything about it, I went back to England for a spell, and returned a month later to find the bismarckia gone. *Bismarckia nobilis* is the most beautiful palm tree in existence. I had dreamed of growing a bismarckia for 20 years; had invested an enormous amount of money in the biggest one I could afford as soon as we arrived here. They are difficult to establish and I had watered it conscientiously for two years and it had finally started to put out new leaves. If the gopher had eaten my husband's leg off I could not have been crosser or sadder.

There are, unsurprisingly, a number of gopher control measures available. Without resorting to poisons – to lose the dog on top of the bismarckia would be madness – I am prepared to try every one. Local friends, when they have eventually finished with the inevitable I-told-you-so tiresomeness, are generous with their personal remedies. The internet is awash with products, suggestions and how-to videos. It is only a question of which system of extermination to try first.

And now I know my enemy. I know the scale and architecture of his bunker; his strengths and weaknesses; his secret desires. He will pay for his crimes with his blood. There will be no more delegating to owls, or imagining that the natural balance will see everything come right in the end. Misfortune has changed me, and not for the better. The time of innocence is over and the gopher must die, and I will know no rest until I am the one to land the killing blow. □

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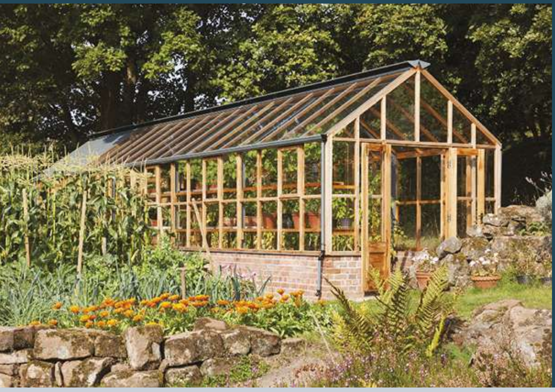

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